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LOVE AND MONEY.

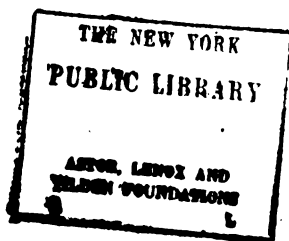
BY

J. B. Jones
J. B. JONES.

**AUTHOR OF "THE RIVAL BELLES," "WILD WESTERN SCENES,"
"WILD SOUTHERN SCENES," ETC.**

"This work is equal to any of the productions of Thackeray or Dickens, so promptly republished and so extensively patronized in this country. A bold assertion—but it will be verified by the thousands who will assuredly peruse the book. Without being sectional, personal, or partizan—without pandering to public prejudices, or aiming to achieve a parasitical popularity—the author has wisely relied upon his own powers and his own merits for success. From the first chapter to the last, the story is intensely interesting. The plot is deeply conceived and skillfully unfolded. The characters—including churchmen, politicians, bankers, lawyers, physicians, publishers, critics, authors and lovers—are strikingly developed; and there is not a line in the book that the most pious mother would hesitate to read to her daughter. Every page furnishes evidence of profound thought and patient elaboration. The events occur in natural progression, and the attention of the reader is arrested by an irresistible fascination."—*Publisher's Critical Reader.*

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LOVE AND MONEY.

BY J. B. JONES.

CHAPTER I.

SUSAN MEEK'S INTERVIEW WITH THE AGED LAWYER—THE WOOF AND THE WARP.

It was Christmas eve. The snow was descending rapidly. Gusts of wind howled mournfully through the streets, and ever and anon they burst from the alleys and narrow courts in explosions. Many a face was turned quickly away from the rude blasts of the storm in the vain endeavor to escape their unfriendly peltings. But it might not be. Every street had its pedestrians. From the Delaware to the Schuylkill; from the grimly frowning Moyamensing prison to the extreme northern limits of the environs of Philadelphia; human beings might have been seen passing with unceasing tramp along the pavements. Some on business; some in quest of pleasure, and others—poor miserable creatures!—because they were destitute of homes; unfortunate outcasts, relying upon some chance occurrence for the means of shelter. And, perhaps, a majority of these were females, with delicate cheeks and throbbing hearts; and yet with light and tattered garments no sufficient covering to protect their heads from

the howling frost-laden blasts; and no effectual defences for their feet against the chilling snow.

When the great State House clock was striking eight, a woman of diminutive size, enveloped in a coarse shawl of scanty dimensions, and partially sheltered from the descending snow by an old cotton umbrella, the handle of which had been fractured near the centre, emerged from an alley into one of the fashionable streets in the western part of the city. Without lifting her eyes from the pavement, she strode onward with all the rapidity of which she was capable. Although curious glances were directed towards her by the stragglers of both sexes whom she met, she did not deign to return them. She looked neither to the right nor the left. Drawing the shawl closely around her slight form, she continued to urge forward her steps with an energy and determination that evinced the importance of her object. Not even the impertinent observation or rude interrogatory which more than once assailed her ears, seemed to elicit from her the slightest perceptible attention.

She continued along Spruce street in an easterly direction, and only paused for a moment when opposite the hospital. She never could pass that venerable pile without pausing. She lifted her eyes, and beheld a glimmering light in one of the rooms, which she had once occupied. When she was quite young, an orphan, and without money, she had been stricken down by illness, and Mr. Knell, the sexton of St. ——'s church, her only serviceable friend in the world, had prevailed on Mr. Mulvany, the deacon, to intercede with the rector, whose influence procured her a gratuitous admission within that institution. She was restored to health within its walls; and ever after, when passing it, no matter how inclement the weather might be, it was her invariable habit to pause and whisper a heart-felt benediction upon its founders and managers.

Upon reaching Sixth street, Susan Meek, for such was her humble name, turned her face toward the north, and continued her brisk pace along the pavement on the east side of Washington square, over the bleak grounds of which, and through the snow laden limbs of the trees, the wind whistled wildly. She crossed Walnut street,

and a few moments afterwards pulled timidly at the bell of one of the numerous law offices in that vicinity.

She was admitted by a tall, pale old man, who had evidently been awaiting her arrival. He held a small lamp in his hand, for the narrow hall or passage had in it no other light. No family dwelt in the house. All the rooms had been converted into lawyers' offices. Most of the tenants spent their evenings at home; and none lodged there except it might be one or two bachelors of slender fortune and uncertain practice.

"Ugh—ugh—ugh! What a night?—Ugh—ugh—ugh! Don't mind me, child—ugh!—It will soon be over!" said the old man, stooping down and coughing violently.

Seeing symptoms of alarm in the expressive face of Susan, the old man had placed his hand on her shoulder, as if apprehensive that she might depart.

"Oh, sir, I hope you do not often have such violent attacks!" said Susan, when another fit of coughing occurred. "Give me the lamp, sir, if you please," she continued, seeing that the excessive agitations of the old man's chest rendered him incapable of keeping the flame erect. He gave it silently, and turning his face towards the wall, remained for another brief space of time the submissive victim of his malady.

It might be supposed that a confirmed asthma was quite sufficient to deprive any one of the ability to pursue the legal profession; and in truth, Mr. Daniel L. Parke, the elderly gentleman introduced to the reader, had not, for many years, attempted to make a speech in court. *Once* he had been able to make speeches which electrified his hearers. *Once* his income amounted to thousands. And he had retired with an independent fortune. How he lost his fortune, may be explained in the sequel; but, being lost, there need be no explanation of the motive which induced him, in his old age, to attempt to obtain a subsistence in the profession by which he had won distinction.

Mr. Parke was now in his sixtieth year. His hair was white; but his eye was bright, his form erect, and his hand quite steady, when not convulsed by his agonising cough.

"It is over, for the present, thank heaven!" said he,

straightening up, smiling, and taking the lamp again; he then led the way to a small chamber in the third story, followed silently by Susan.

A table, a settee, a cot, and a rickety washstand, comprised the furniture. On the table lay some half a dozen law books, mostly reports of important cases. And these few appurtenances alone were left to the once opulent and famous lawyer! On the wall there hung a threadbare black coat, the elbows and cuffs of which were perfectly glazed. He was now wrapped in his patched and quilt-like gown.

"Sit down, Susan," said he, quite cheerfully; "sit on the settee; I have neither room nor money for chairs. I will swallow a raw oyster I have on the shelf. It is my best remedy."

It was likewise his food. A cracker and an oyster, every hour or so, constituted his daily fare. Sometimes, but not always, his finances enabled him to enjoy the luxury of a bottle of ale, or a cup of coffee.

We have said that Susan was a diminutive body. Her face was thin and bloodless. Her features, however, were regular and not unhandsome. The mild and intelligent gaze of her dark eye expressed a mingled sadness and deference when in the presence of persons of superior intellect, which could not but inspire the conviction that although poor, and in humble position, she was one that might be safely confided in. She was near the thirtieth year of her age, but might have passed for a much younger woman.

"Well, child," said Mr. Parke, sitting beside Susan on the settee, "I received your note. Upon what business do you wish to have my advice and assistance? Surely it must be something of very great importance, or else you would not have come forth in such terrible weather as this."

"It is of importance, of vast importance, Mr. Parke," replied Susan, her uniformly pale features assuming almost a deathly hue, while her eyes were steadily fixed on his benevolent face. Her voice, however, was slightly tremulous.

"Then, child, explain the matter frankly and fully. You may rely upon my discretion if it be a secret, and upon having my assistance, if I can serve you. I remember

seeing you frequently at my poor deceased brother's house; and the good opinion I formed of your conduct there, was likewise entertained by him and his wife, both, alas, now no more!"

The old man's eyes were moistened by the recollection. Susan had been much employed in the family in the capacity of an humble companion, and had been assiduous in her kind attentions during the fatal illness which had carried off both the husband and wife. She had understood, indeed, that she was a distant relative of Mr. Parke; but never sought to trace the degrees herself.

"It is not only important to me, but to others who perhaps have ceased to think of the matter; and to you, sir, among the rest."

"To me!" exclaimed Mr. Parke, quickly, adjusting his silver spectacles, and looking more pointedly in the face of Susan. "Speak out, then; without delay, without ceremony."

"Mr. Eugene Bainton, the brother of your deceased sister-in-law, has returned to the city."

"I know it!" said Mr. Parke, sharply, and the moment after, he was attacked by another fit of coughing, which rendered him incapable of speaking for several minutes. "I can never think of that individual with composure," he continued, when his chest ceased to be racked by the paroxysm. "He has been in the city several weeks. I have met him, but not conversed with him. I want nothing to do with him. I believe him to be a villain. He ruined both my brother and myself."

"He seems to be rich, sir."

"Ay; and hence I say he is a villain. He was poor; he had not a dollar, until my brother and myself entrusted him with our funds, and gave him the power to use our credit. He is rich; we are beggars; at least, I, the sole surviving brother and partner, am destitute. Hence, I repeat, he is a villain. Speak of him no more!"

"I must speak of him. The wicked must be punished, and the wronged must be righted."

"Ay, if you can give me any information by which that may be done, I will dwell upon your words with delight!"

"As you may remember, I was present with both your

brother and Mrs. Parke during their last moments. But then you were dangerously ill yourself, and it was supposed you could not recover. An hour before your brother expired, he pointed to a small black chest in the chamber, and desired me to take possession of it, and to guard it carefully when he was no more. He gave me the key from under his pillow. He said the chest contained some letters that might be useful to his son, then about six years old. Both the boy and the box he confided to me—but the poor child—poor Ned—was dragged away by Mr. Job Mallex, and put into the house of refuge——”

“Where he died! Where he was murdered, perhaps!” exclaimed the old man, averting his head, and wiping the tears from his eyes with a tattered silk handkerchief.

“No! thank God! No—no—no!” cried Susan, in a shrill voice, with her arms hysterically elevated over her head.

“Susan! child!” said Mr. Parke, rising energetically to his feet, and placing his hands on her shoulders. In vain he endeavored to scrutinize her countenance. There was a mist before his eyes or a film upon his glasses. “Susan,” he continued, with an effort to be calm, “repress your excitement. Let us be composed. You have started a hope in my breast. Your next word may annihilate it. But still I would be calm. What am I to understand by your exclamations? Young Edward, my brother’s child, was truly thrust into the house of refuge, and by Job Mallex, a stock-jobber, who somewhat mysteriously intermeddled in the closing scenes of my brother’s life. But I never doubted that my nephew expired at the time and place they reported. I was unable to bestow upon him any personal attention. Am I to understand that the report was false?”

“Will you forgive me? Oh, will you pardon what I have done?” responded Susan.

“Forgive you! If I have misunderstood the meaning of your words, oh, yes—I forgive you as freely as I hope to be forgiven. But if I have rightly conceived your meaning—if the poor friendless and destitute orphan was rescued from his miserable place of abode—miserable to him, because he had hitherto subsisted upon luxuries, and

had been cherished by the smiles of parental affection—and did not perish—still lives—I not only pardon you, but invoke all the blessings of Heaven upon your head!”

“Oh, sir! sir! He did not perish! He lives! He is well!”

The old lawyer was completely overcome. He buried his face in his hands, and long remained silent.

“But why did you crave my pardon?” asked Mr. Parke, when he had regained the mastery of his feelings.

“Because I have so long concealed from you the fact that he lived.”

“And why have you done so?”

“For several reasons. I knew that you were too poor to maintain him——”

“True! I do not more than half subsist myself.”

“Another reason was my affection for poor Ned. I could not bear to part with him. Another reason was the fear, that if his existence were known, Mr. Job Mallex would again take possession of him. I know not why I should fear him so; but I have never suffered him to see little Ned—who is not so small now, either, being ten years old—and have always avoided meeting him. Mallex and Bainton were always intimate friends—both were poor—both are now rich.”

“It is strange!” observed Mr. Parke.

“The chest of letters——”

“Ay, the chest of letters!” iterated the aged lawyer

“Ned and I have been reading them.”

“Can the boy read?”

“That he can; and write, too! Oh, I have toiled bravely for him! and he learns without difficulty. I was almost illiterate myself, and hardly able to read the letters when they were placed in my keeping. But it is surprising what one may accomplish, when one’s heart and mind are wholly embarked in any purpose!”

“True, true enough!” said Mr. Parke, in admiration of Susan’s enthusiasm and profound deduction.

“I had health, after surviving one terrible attack, and worked incessantly, both with my needle and at my lessons. And Ned was scarcely a pace behind me. Mr. Mulvany, the rector’s assistant, likewise conceived an

ardent affection for the child. He taught us both. He says Ned will make a great scholar, and has already commenced giving him lessons in Latin."

"Excellent! excellent!" exclaimed the old man; "I must see master Ned Parke——"

"Not Parke, sir; we are afraid to call him by that name. We call him simply Ned Lorn."

"Lorn was my mother's name. I remember it was given my brother's boy in baptism. I must see him!"

"You have seen him several times. On several occasions I have had him with me at the widow Dimple's, where I was doing some fine work. Several times during your visits, I have seen you glance kindly at the boy."

"I remember! Was that my nephew?"

"It was. I trembled when I saw you gaze so steadfastly at him, I feared you would ask whose child it was."

"I *did* ask, when alone with Mrs. Dimple. There was something in his frank and interesting face that reminded me of my brother's child."

"Ah, sir! you need not tell me what Mrs. Dimple replied. I know it too well!" said Susan, mournfully.

"Noble, generous girl!" said Mr. Parke; "you have cheerfully borne the injurious—but false—imputations of the world, for the purpose of more effectually protecting your charge! True, Mrs. Dimple intimated that according to the received impression, he was your own child. But she said she loved the boy, and felt an affection for you."

"She has ever been my friend. But if it pleased her to see the boy, her daughter Alice liked to enjoy the same pleasure. Alice is about the same age as Ned; and it was always at her express desire that Ned accompanied me to the mansion."

"But the letters!" said Mr. Parke, recurring to an idea which seemed to interest him more and more.

"Oh, yes, the letters. Mr. Mulvany says that two of them should be placed in your hands, and I have brought them with me." She took them from her bosom and placed them in the aged lawyer's hand.

Mr. Parke opened one of them, and at first seemed to run his eye carelessly over its contents. But as he proceeded his interest in the text seemed to be most astonish-

ingly increased. His hand became nervous; his lips parted; his eyes dilated. He was entirely engrossed with the nature and importance of the revelation contained in the letter, and remained for a long time, unconscious of the presence of Susan. He hastily opened the second letter, which excited him quite as much as the first. When he had finished its perusal, and not till then, did he change his attitude of deep abstraction. Finally, turning to his visitor, he said:

"You have done well, Susan. Return now to your home. Live precisely as you have been doing. I need not warn you to be prudent—silent—cautious—for there is *danger* that you, that we, may lose the dear boy——"

"Oh, sir!"

"Make no change in your mode of living. Keep Ned out of sight as much as possible. Do nothing without my advice and concurrence, and everything may be accomplished that you could wish. These letters *are* important. If any one applies to you for them, be ignorant of their existence. Come to me at this hour any evening. You will always find me here. I never go out after night-fall in the winter. Adieu, child! God bless you!"

Susan arose and departed, unable from her emotions to utter another word.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW THE CREDULITY OF THE INNOCENT MAY BE IMPOSED UPON.

SUSAN had left the alley in which she dwelt, as we have seen, at eight o'clock in the evening. At that hour she had requested her humble foster brother, Timothy Trudge, the coachman of the widow Dimple, to be at her house. The provident Susan did not choose to leave her boy without having a protector near him during her absence. And Tim had as great an affection for Ned as herself. But

something or other had prevented Tim from keeping his appointment. It could not be forgetfulness: Tim never forgot his appointments with his foster sister and protectress, and never neglected an opportunity of being with poor little Ned Lorn, as he called him. In truth he was Ned's pupil, and had learned to read the city papers under his instruction. Not doubting that Tim would arrive soon after her departure, Susan, as has been already described, sallied forth in the snow-storm, to keep her own appointment with Mr. Parke.

Master Ned, then, was left alone: not entirely alone either, for Bob was with him—Bob, the playful black tom-cat who turned summersets on the floor, and performed all sorts of antics for his amusement.

The house was diminutive, of course. Susan could not afford to occupy a better one. True, Tim's salary was \$150, which, bating the trifle spent for his clothing, was always given to his foster sister, to be disbursed as she saw proper. He well knew that none of it would be improperly expended by his frugal banker. Susan had procured Tim's situation for him. When his mother, who had been Susan's nurse, departed this life leaving no fortune, the girl being several years older than the boy, had provided for his subsistence; and now he strove to repay her.

Ned had his books in readiness. Every time the door was shaken by a gust of wind, he looked up in the expectation of greeting the smiling face of his friend Tim. And when he was disappointed, he continued his sports with Bob, who evinced a most extraordinary disposition for play that evening. He sprang upon the table; upon Ned's shoulder; then upon the mantle-piece; and when dislodged from thence, capered round the room at a rapid rate, making his feet sound upon the floor like the beating of a muffled drum.

"Bob, you must be expecting to receive some fine present this Christmas," said Ned, standing before the small grate, and looking down at his sprightly companion.

Bob answered with a mew.

"I can't understand your language, Bob," he continued, "unless you mean that you would like something to eat. If

that be it, you must wait till Susan returns. I must not open the cupboard without her permission."

Bob had rarely received anything from that source. Susan could not afford it. But he did not suffer for food, as his enormous corpulency attested. The rats were too abundant for that.

"That must be Tim!" said Ned, distinctly hearing footsteps in the alley. They paused before the door. "Why, what's the matter, now?" he continued, seeing the cat humping his back, with his tail elevated and prodigiously enlarged. The only reply to this was a furious growl from the animal, whose eyes gleamed and sparkled most surprisingly. Ned was almost frightened. He had never before seen the cat assume so ferocious an aspect.

"I wish Tim would come!" said the half-alarmed boy, gliding noiselessly to the front window, through which he stealthily peered from behind a dingy calico curtain. He could hear the sounds of low voices, but the speakers were standing so near to the wall of the house as to be hidden from view.

The following was the colloquy which was going on without:

"This must be the house. Betty said it was the seventh from the corner, and on the east side."

"There's a light within, suppose we knock?"

"But what shall we say? What shall we do?"

"If this Susan Meek, who was with Parke during his last moments, has possession of the letters, we must endeavor to obtain them at all hazards, and at any cost. *One* of them, and, perhaps, *two*, which I wrote under the cursed influence of weakness, or fear—for he had sworn to be terribly revenged, if I ruined him—might play the deuce with me—with both of us—if they should fall into the hands of any one disposed to demand an investigation."

And who would be benefited! Old Daniel is dying, or soon will be. The son is dead. There is no other heir, you say?"

"None. But yet I am not quite sure the son died at the house of refuge——"

"Hah! Why, did we not take him up and bury him again in a handsome lot in —— cemetery?"

"We dug up a small coffin and transferred it to the cemetery, it is true. But there was something equivocal in the speech and conduct of the old hag of a matron who directed us to the place of interment."

"There was? I did not observe it!"

"Ay, there was! There were many mysterious nods and shakes of the head, that were meant to attract my notice. And when we parted, she whispered a demand of \$100 per annum."

"Hah!" exclaimed Job Mallex, who had really supposed the boy was dead and buried. "It was mere impertinence! The old hag supposes there is something in the transaction which you would fain have concealed. She knows not what it is. But the old wicked strumpet thinks she has you in her power, and wants to extort money. Curse her! I wish *she* were buried! We should have opened his coffin—"

"No!" said Eugene Bainton. "There would have been no use in it. Who could identify the lad?"

"We should have been sure there was a lad in it. Pah! I know some one was there. The atmosphere was horrible! But if the boy had lived, and these unlucky letters once in our possession, he could never have molested us."

"Ay; and we must possess them for fear he may turn up living hereafter; and to keep his old wheezing uncle quiet."

"Well. If this is the house, let us enter."

They knocked. The door flew open.

"Come in! I'm so glad to see you, Tim!" cried Ned.
"Oh it's not Tim! Who do you want to see?"

Bainton and Mallex entered without stopping to answer the question. There was no hall, and but one room on the lower floor. The intruders did not pause until they stood in the centre of the room, which was but dimly illuminated by the rays of a very small camphine lamp on the table, in the midst of Ned's books.

"Fasten the door, Job," said Bainton, after glancing around the apartment, and finding no one present but the boy. He was obeyed. The next instant they were startled

by the cries of the King Charles spaniel which had accompanied them. Bob, the cat, had seized upon it under the table. Bob was quite as large as the dog, and altogether its master.

"Kill the cat! Kill it!" cried Mallex. Bainton raised his cane.

"Don't hurt poor Bob!" cried Ned, who had retreated in terror to an obscure corner, but now summoned sufficient courage to intercede for his pet, which he snatched up in his arms.

"We must not lose time," said Bainton to his companion. "My little fellow," he continued, turning to Ned, and regarding his beautiful pale face and expressive eyes with an involuntary interest, "we are not robbers; we do not intend to injure a hair of your head, or of your cat's head either. But I see he has slit the ears of my dog."

"He didn't mean to do it, sir! If the dog hadn't pulled away from him so fast——"

"Never mind, my lad. Where is your mother?"

"My mother?"

"Yes. Is not Susan Meek your mother?"

"No sir. My mother's dead?"

"Indeed. What is your name?"

"Ned Lorn."

"Lorn? Ned? That's Edward!"

"They call me Ned, sir, since my mother died."

"Your mother!" continued Bainton, pale and still staring at the tearful face of the boy.

"Recollect, we must not lose time," said Mallex, seeing that his associate seemed to be rooted to the spot.

"True, Job!" responded Bainton, making an effort to shake off his troublesome fancies.

"Well, Ned," he continued, "we are Susan's friends, and we have brought her a Christmas gift. Where is she?"

"I do not know where she went, sir; but she said she would be back by ten o'clock."

"And left you all alone?"

"Tim Trudge promised to be here by eight o'clock, and stay with me."

The men exchanged glances.

"Here is the present, Ned," said Bainton, handing the

boy a purse. "You must give it to Susan when she returns, and say that Mr. Mallex and his friend left it as a reward for her faithful services to the deceased Mr. Parke, and for taking care of the letters the dying man put in her charge."

"Yes, sir."

"She still keeps the letters, securely?" asked Mallex.

"Oh, yes sir! You mean my father's letters in the black box?"

"Do you hear, Mallex? Do you hear that?" said Bainton, turning deadly pale, and trembling violently.

"That *is* a poser!" replied Job, thrusting his hands into the pockets of his capacious overcoat, and surveying the features of the child. "It *is* a poser, Bainton. Don't you think there is a resemblance——"

"Resemblance? I saw it the moment we entered. We have been deceived. What shall be done now?"

Ned, finding himself the object of so intense a scrutiny, hung down his head and petted his cat, which still growled at the dog that whined between his master's feet.

"Ay, that is the question," replied Mallex, in a low tone. "But we have the game in our own hands—both the letters and the boy. My good little fellow, can you tell us where Susan keeps those letters?" he asked, turning to Ned.

Ned was silent. He recollected that Susan had warned him never to mention that she had any letters in her possession. He felt sorry for what he had already divulged in relation to them.

"Do you know where the letters are?" repeated Mallex.

"Have you seen Susan, sir? Did she tell you that there were any letters in this house?"

"Yes—that is—we know all about it; and that is what we are giving Susan the money for. Is there another house in which she keeps her letters?"

"Indeed I do not know, sir. Sit down and wait till Susan, or Tim comes in. I wonder why Tim don't come!"

"Tim will come presently," said Bainton; "he could not get away from his mistress as soon as he promised. I know Tim very well. He will come as soon as he can."

"I wish he would come now!" said Ned, in mingled alarm and vexation.

"Bainton!" said Mallex in a whisper, "You recollect

what Betty Simple told us? She said this boy was very intimate with the widow's little daughter—that there was a sort of childish affection subsisting between them—and by pretending to be the friends of Alice, we would certainly obtain the confidence of Ned. I think I have a plan by which we can get the boy away without using violence and alarming the neighbourhood.”

“You think so?”

“I am sure of it.”

“Then set about it quickly. But do not hurt the little fellow. Since I have seen him, I don't think I could stand by calmly, while——”

“Nonsense, man! I am not meditating a murder. But you need not see, you need not know, what is done. But something *must* be done! I have myself too much depending upon his being kept out of the way, to be balked by trifles! But I will not hurt him. I shall take him with me in the cab out to Jack Cadaver's house, while you remain and hunt for the letters.”

“Very good! But be quick, or that foolish fellow Tim will be here upon us!”

Mallex then approached Ned with a smiling countenance, which, however, could hardly be observed through the exuberance of yellow hair which almost covered his face. Bainton sat down near the table, and seemed to be examining the books.

“Ned,” said Mallex, “we came near forgetting to deliver you a message from little Alice Dimple. You know her?”

“Oh, yes!” said the boy, wonderfully relieved by the mere mention of her name. “Do you know Alice!” he asked, advancing a step, and with a smile upon his lip.

“Know her! Just as well as if she were my own child. We saw her this evening at her mother's house, where we are in the habit of visiting very often. She is a charming girl and loves you dearly.”

“She is the only friend I have, near my own age; and always speaks to me kindly and sweetly when I go with Susan to Mrs. Dimple's house. You say she sent me a message?”

"Yes. She is having great fun to-night, and says you must share it with her."

"To-night, sir?"

"Yes. Sleighing. She wants you to ride with her and her mother. Tim is to be the driver, you know. He is waiting for you, and that is the reason he is not here."

"But I can't go till Susan comes back! And that will be too late! Alice will be asleep."

"Why can't you go at once?" asked Bainton. "I intend to remain here till Susan comes home, and will give her the money myself."

"And you, Ned," said Mallex, "will be back yourself before ten o'clock. Tim will come with you, and Susan will not know you have been away at all. What a fine Christmas frolic that will be!"

"But that won't do," said Ned; "I never conceal anything from Susan!"

"Yet you will have a fine Christmas ride with Alice, and be all the time near Tim, who, you know, was to be with you till Susan returned."

"Yes—if Alice desired me——"

"I tell you she sent word expressly for you to come; and sent the cab which is now waiting in the street at the mouth of the alley. Come! have you an overcoat?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, taking the garment from an old wardrobe.

"Put it on quick! The sooner you get there, the longer time Tim will have to drive you."

"But if Susan should come while I'm away——"

"If she does, I will explain everything to her," said Bainton.

"But, my cat——"

"Never mind him. There is no danger of my dog attacking him again; and I promise you he shall not be hurt."

"Come, Ned!" continued Mallex, taking the lad gently by the arm, "I will go all the way with you; and when you are with Tim and Alice, I can leave you."

Ned was led out. There were some lingering misgivings, or symptoms of reluctance, manifested in his doubtful looks and hesitating steps. But Mallex followed up his

advantage. He did not suffer the child to think for himself, until they were seated in the cab and gliding out Broad street at a rapid pace.

Both Bainton and Mallex were known to be rich. They were large dealers in the stocks, and held a vast deal of real estate in the city. Hence they found admission into the best society. They had been, as they had intimated, at the mansion of the widow Dimple that day. They were truly frequent visitors there, and on such terms of intimacy with that wealthy and fashionable lady, that many regarded them as rival suitors for her hand and fortune.

While seated in one of the splendid saloons of the widow's mansion that day, they chanced to hear little Alice mention the name of Susan Meek. Mallex had not met with Susan for several years, and Bainton had not seen her since his sister's death. But in their frequent conferences, since the return of the latter to the city, her name had been often referred to. They had arrived at the conclusion that the missing letters must have fallen into her possession. From that moment they sought to ascertain the place of her abode. Hitherto their endeavours had been fruitless, although they had both been seen more than once by the vigilant Susan.

Hence when they heard the name so unexpectedly mentioned, they immediately declared that they were in quest of Susan, and desired to see her on business of some importance. Alice, and her nurse, Betty Simple, were called in and questioned fully in regard to her. Indeed so particular were the interrogatories of the gentlemen, so prolonged were their investigations, and so absorbed had they become in the subject, that the widow withdrew to another part of the house, leaving them to pursue a matter which seemed to be so interesting without the embarrassment which might be produced by her presence.

Alice expressed her admiration of Ned in very emphatic terms; Betty, simple by nature, as well as by name, was thoughtless and excessively voluble. She was only too happy to be able to pour out a prodigious volume of information, every word of which being, however, turned to account by the listeners. Even Tim, honest Tim, almost as simple as Betty, and quite as fond of talking, was called

in. From him they learned that he was to spend the evening at his foster-sister's house, and was to be the companion and protector of Ned during Susan's absence.

At once the idea was conceived to balk Tim's purpose, and to visit Susan's lodgings themselves. And, when it was near eight o'clock, and after the stately widow had resumed her place in the parlor, Mr. Mallex started up suddenly, and declared that he had most neglectfully left upon his table in his office a fine volume which he intended to bring as a present for Alice. Alice seemed disappointed. The weather was very bad. The office was in the eastern part of the city. It was determined to send Tim for the book immediately. Mr. Mallex wrote a note to his clerk, who slept in the office, and Tim set out on his errand at a very brisk pace. He did not use the omnibuses—he passed them all. It was economy of time that actuated and impelled him—not of money. He would have expended a dollar cheerfully, rather than disappoint Ned; but his legs could accomplish more than his purse, and he did not spare them.

Tim arrived, panting, in an almost inconceivably brief space of time in front of Mr. Mallex's office. Shaking the snow from his cap and coat, he gave a startling rap at the door. The old man—Mr. Mallex's confidential clerk, was a pale, wrinkled, bald-headed person—hastened to open the door. He seemed alarmed. The violence of Tim's rapping had made him fear the house was on fire. Tim thrust the note into his hand, and evinced an impatience to be on his return. The clerk looked at him in surprise, and then at the superscription of the note, which he found no difficulty in recognizing by the effulgence of the gas-light which he had not omitted to turn fully on before he opened the door.

"Oh, ay; come back with me," he said, reading the epistle, while something resembling the faint glimmer of a smile played upon his thin lips. He closed the door very carefully. It seemed to fasten itself by a spring, the clicking of which made Tim start.

When they were in the back part of the office, the old clerk re-perused the note very carefully, and seemed, for several moments, to be lost in thought.

"It's only a book, isn't it sir?" asked Tim, who declined the invitation to be seated.

"Yes; but its not here; at least I don't see it," said Mr. Fawner, looking about among the desks.

"He said he left it in his office. I'm sure its here, somewhere," replied Tim, glancing his eyes in every direction, for his impatience to be off increased rapidly.

"I don't see it!" continued Fawner, still peering about very deliberately, and by no means partaking of Tim's impatience.

"Mr. Fawner!" said Tim, "if we cannot find it now, I can come again to-morrow, when Mr. Mallex will be here himself."

"No, no; don't be in a hurry. Mr. Mallex has perhaps put it carefully away in some hole or corner, not doubting any one could find it. I will read his note again."

He did read it again; and if there had been twenty pages of it instead of but a few lines, Tim felt certain that he might have perused them all, over and over again, during the time he expended staring at the sheet.

"Mr. Fawner!" said Tim, almost losing his patience, "the book ain't in the letter! You don't seem to hunt for it anywhere else!"

"Let us both search for it, then," replied Mr. Fawner, crumpling up the note and throwing it in the stove. It rebounded, however, and falling at the feet of Tim, he picked it up unobserved and placed it in his pocket. He determined to get Ned to read it for him, just to find out what it was that seemed to occupy so much of Mr. Fawner's precious time.

They searched together; but in vain. More than a quarter of an hour was consumed in this manner.

"There's no use in it!" said Tim. "It isn't here."

"Don't give it up so!" said the clerk, still rummaging about among the papers and peeping into the pigeon holes. "We must not be discouraged by trifles. Perseverance is the secret of success, as all the rich philosophers say."

"Consume the rich philosophers, I say! Mr. Fawner, I want to be on my way back. Do you know I am to be at Miss Susan's this evening at eight o'clock?"

"No; really? Why, look there," said he, pointing at

the clock against the wall. "Time was up half an hour ago."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Tim, looking at the clock with dismay depicted in his face. "Good bye, Mr. Fawner, I must run for it. Can't wait a minute longer for all the books in the world." Saying this Tim buttoned his heavy coat up to his chin, and pulling his cap down over his ears, started for the door. Upon reaching it, he turned the knob of the ponderous lock, and uttered an exclamation of surprise when he found it would not come open.

"You can't open it that way," said Mr. Fawner; "it is locked; turn the key."

"There's no key here!" said Tim. "Come and let me out!"

"No key?" cried Fawner, striding forward quickly; "where is it? I left it in the door. Did you hear it fall when I closed the door? Help me to find it."

Some ten minutes were consumed in hunting for the key.

"I shall burst it open before your face!" exclaimed Tim, unable to stand still a moment in his excessive agitation. I will not stay here another minute, Mr. Fawner! I'll be consumed if I do!"

"Nonsense, man! Just wait till I find the key."

"I won't! By gosh, I can't wait another minute!"

"You must be patient till I find the key. How can you get out before the door is open?"

"I'll smash it!"

"That's impossible. It is five inches thick, and ironed on one side."

"My goodness! What shall I do! Ned's waiting; Alice is waiting; Susan 'll be mad! The confounded key must be somewhere. Where is it, Mr. Fawner?"

"Yes; it must be somewhere; and in this room, too; for it was in my hand when you entered. Now, sir!" said the clerk, "if you've got it, and intend to rob the office, I'll show you that I'm not unprepared to defend the premises!" Saying this, he exhibited a pistol and pointed it towards Tim's breast.

"Goo—goo—good—Gracious! Mr. Fawner!" stuttered Tim, retreating backward, with his arms extended, and his fingers spread apart.

"I don't charge you with having such an intention, Tim; but you know one must always be prepared for such contingencies."

"Oh my goodness gracious!" exclaimed Tim, the perspiration rolling from his aghast countenance. "In all my born days, I never once thought of robbing a human mortal of the value of one cent! And if you kill me on the spot, Mr. Fawner, you will murder an innocent man, who never did anybody any injury in the world!

"Have you not got the key in your pocket?"

"Me! I'll strip! Search my pockets! No! I'm afraid of that pistol! Here, look!" He turned his pockets inside out. The crumpled note fell to the floor. "That's all! as the Lord is my witness, that's all!"

But as Fawner did not observe it, and was in fact under the necessity of averting his face to conceal the smile produced by the terror and ludicrous attitudes of his victim, Tim seized the note and thrust it back again into his pocket without explaining what it was.

"I'm satisfied, Tim," said the clerk.

"Then put away that pistol, I beg of you!"

"Very well. I'll put it in my desk," said Fawner, walking back to the rear of the office, while Tim stood trembling, and looking wistfully at the door.

"There's nine, and I'm here!" muttered the poor coachman, hearing the clock strike.

"And here's the key!" said Fawner. "I must have left it on the desk myself."

"Thank goodness!" cried Tim, skipping back to the desk in great glee. "I'm so glad! Oh, it's a mighty terrible thing, Mr. Fawner, for a poor innocent man to be charged with stealing. It sticks to his character like aqua-fortis upon plated brass; you cannot scrub it off without ruining the ornament." Tim was perhaps thinking of his coach or his mistress's door-plate.

"True, Tim; and I hope you will forgive me."

"Oh, there's no harm done; the key's found. Now I can go with a light heart, if I am an hour behind my time."

"Yes. Take the key, and unlock the door."

Tim stepped forward with alacrity, and inserting the key

in the lock turned it with a vigorous wrench. Then seizing the knob, he turned it, too; but still the door would not come open. He turned the key back the other way; but the result was the same.

"Mr. Fawner," cried he, "I can't unlock the door. How do you turn it?"

"It is a very simple process. Turn it to the right."

"I did, sir, but it wouldn't come open."

"Then there's something wrong about it," said the clerk, going forward.

The truth was, the key had to be turned three times, which never could have occurred to Tim. For a long time the clerk seemed to essay in vain to unlock the door, declaring that Tim had broken the lock. Tim, miserable from his cruel detention, solemnly protested his innocence. He even wept with vexation. Finally, and when it wanted only twenty-five minutes to ten o'clock, Fawner, making a seemingly violent wrench of the key, the door flew open. Tim flew out. He fled along the street. One or two pedestrians, muffled, and nearly blinded by the falling snow, were tumbled into the gutter on coming in collision with him. Although he begged pardon, and declared it was accidental, he did not stop to pick them up. He never paused until he reached the point where it was necessary for him to decide whether he should go first to his mistress's or to Susan's house, and then he halted with an abruptness almost as sudden as if he had run against a wall. For several moments he remained perfectly motionless, unable to decide the difficult question. If Mr. Mallex had remained at the mansion awaiting his return, it would be very wrong not to report his ill-success to him. If, on the other hand, anything should happen to frighten Ned, or to cause him any injury or unhappiness, how could he ever forgive himself for not having rushed to his rescue at the earliest moment in his power?

"Oh, goodness!" exclaimed he, "I wish I could be split in two, if it wouldn't hurt me, and a half of me could run to each place at the same time! Poor Ned! I'll go to you, if I die for it!"

And after losing no inconsiderable time, and precious moments, too, in solving this difficult problem, he set forward again.

CHAPTER III.

EUGENE FINDS THE LETTERS.

AFTER Job Mallex and Ned Lorn had departed from the house in the alley, Eugene Bainton threw down the volume (Robinson Crusoe) which he had apparently been reading, and rose from the chair.

"That boy is my nephew, my sister's child!" he said, in a low, harsh voice. "But what if he is? I feel no affection for him. I may have children of my own. But if he be identified, or should come forward himself some day with those accursed letters, what then will be my condition? Ay, and yours, too, Mr. Job Mallex! But we have now truly the game in our own hands, if we but play it skilfully. Job has the boy, and I must have the letters." Saying this, he commenced the search. Not making any discovery in the lower room, he placed his foot upon the stairway leading to the upper chamber, and then paused. "This looks like burglary," said he, turning pale at the idea. "What if I should be detected in the act? Nonsense! After what I have already braved, am I to be deterred from securing the final consummation of all my plans? No, indeed!" Holding the lamp in his hand, he first secured the front door of the lower room, and then ascended boldly to the upper apartment.

The black box was found under Susan's bed. The villain seized it, and after pausing to consider whether it would not be as well to depart with it unopened, and without prosecuting his searches any further, he finally concluded to make assurance doubly sure by a brief inspection of its contents. It was no easy task to break open the box. He broke the blades of his knife, without making any impression on the lock. Maddened with disappointment, he seized the box, and placing it under his arm, descended the stairs, with the determination to convey it boldly to his own home, and then perform the operation of removing the top, at his leisure. But when he was in the act of unlocking the door opening into the alley, he

was startled by the chilling sounds of a watchman's rattle. He stepped back in terror, and putting down the box, resumed the chair and the book at the table. He heard the muffled tramp of men running through the alley. In painful intensity he listened. The sounds passed by the door and died away in the distance. Drawing a long breath, Bainton rose up again and seized the box. But now he abandoned the intention of carrying it away with him. Such a burden at such an hour, and when thieves were known to be in the vicinity, would be likely to attract attention. The poker at the fire-place was seen and immediately seized. It was applied successfully. The hinges gave way, not the clasp. A bundle of letters, perhaps some twenty in number, greeted his eager eyes. They were tied with red tape. A glance at the superscription of the upper one, brought a smile of triumph to his lips. He recognized his own handwriting. The package was instantly conveyed to the capacious pocket of his heavy overcoat.

"So much for these!" he exclaimed; "they are my own property, being written by me, and signed with my name. This is *not* robbery!" He then tumbled out the remainder of the contents of the box. There was a heavy purse of money, Susan's savings for many a day. He looked upon it with contempt. But there were likewise articles of jewelry, and a prayer book. These he had seen before. They were presents he had purchased for his deceased sister, the mother of Ned. And on a fly leaf of the book was his own autograph. After gazing at it a moment, he tore out the leaf and cast it into the fire. "Perish the mementoes! can one never get rid of them?" he said, through his fixed teeth. He gathered up the articles of jewelry impulsively, with the intention of depositing them and the book with the letters in his pocket. "No!" said he, suddenly changing his purpose; "that *would* look like robbery." He dashed them down, scattering them over the floor. Finding no more papers he unlocked the door and sallied out. He had not gone twenty paces when he met both Susan and Tim, who had a moment before encountered each other in mutual amazement at the corner of the alley. Bainton held down his head and passed on unrecognized.

CHAPTER IV.

A SCOLDING SUPPRESSED.

"WAS there no back window to get out of!" asked Susan, after hearing Tim's explanation of the cause of his delay.

"I didn't look; I never thought of that."

"But you should have thought of it, Tim!"

"I was so frightened I couldn't think!"

"And poor Ned! I wonder what he has been thinking about all this time, when all alone!"

"We'll soon see. Here we are. I'll buy him a watch out of my wages, if he has been a good boy."

"Why, the door is open!" said Susan, stepping in, followed by Tim.

The lamp upon the table threw a sickly ray over the scene. Susan and Tim, for a moment stricken dumb at the spectacle, stood in the centre of the room, regarding the contents of the box scattered over the floor.

"Ned has been a bad boy to-night!" said Susan. "I never knew him to do such a thing before!"

"Don't scold him," said Tim. "He is ashamed of it now, and has hid himself. He had a right to be angry, because he was left all alone."

"I must scold him for this," she continued, taking up the purse and jewelry, (Bainton had taken back his own purse upon discovering the money in the box,) and locking the door. "Why, I might have been robbed and ruined! He has even taken out the letters, and is no doubt reading them by himself up stairs. And the door has been open all the time! I will scold him severely, Tim."

"No. Don't do it sharp enough to hurt his feelings."

"I *will*, though; or it will do him no good. Upon my word he has broken the top off the box! Did you ever know a boy to be guilty of such an act? and after all I have done for him, too!"

"I don't believe Ned done that!" said Tim, standing with his arms akimbo, and shaking his head while scruti-

nizing the wreck of the black chest. "I don't think he was strong enough, or wicked enough to do any such thing!"

"Who else could have done it? Not a robber, or he would have taken the money and the jewels. Come down to me, Ned Lorn!" she continued, in a loud voice, approaching the door, at the foot of the stairs.

At that moment, Bob, the large black tom-cat, sprang down from the summit of the cupboard, where he had taken refuge when relinquished by Ned. His hair still stood erect upon his back, and his tail resembled a mourning plume.

"Bob, why are you not up there with Ned?" asked Tim. The cat responded with a most piteous cry. "Zax! what's the matter with the he-cat? He looks like the devil was in him! I hope he hasn't swallowed Ned."

"Give me the lamp," said Susan, "and let me fetch Ned down. No wonder he's ashamed to show his face!"

"No! no! let me go!" said Tim, holding the lamp high over his head, and gently pushing Susan aside. "I'm afraid you'll be too hard on the little fellow. It's me, Ned!" continued Tim, ascending the narrow stairway. "Just say you're sorry for it, and I won't let her scold you."

Tim entered the chamber with a quizzical smile upon his broad lip. "You're playing at bo-peep, are you?" he asked, when upon looking around he failed to discover Ned. "I know where you are. You're under the bed. Come out." No reply being made, Tim stooped down and looked under. He was not there, of course. "Oh, you're in the attic, are you? I'll have you!" he continued, going up the ladder. But no Ned was there. Tim's smile was gone. He returned again to the chamber immediately below. He stood in the centre of the room, and silently surveyed every object in it. The bed had not been disturbed, and the boy could not be concealed there. He examined first one closet and then the other, to no purpose. He even stooped down and looked under the bureau, where the space was hardly sufficient to admit the cat. He then stood up, pale and trembling, a picture of dismay.

"Why don't you bring him down," asked Susan, below,

while examining the fractured chest, and trying by the light of the fire, to fit the pieces together again. Tim made no reply. He descended slowly, the lamp quivering in his hand.

"Where is he?" asked Susan. "Why, what's the matter with you?" she continued, dropping the box and hurriedly approaching Tim, whose ghastly features alarmed her. "What's the matter, Tim?" she repeated; "are you sick?"

"N—n—no, Susan!" said he, putting the lamp down on the table. "Don't scream! Don't faint! Bear the shock like a man. Be composed and calm like me! Misfortunes will come——"

"Misfortunes? Tim! What is it? Is it Ned!" she exclaimed, and then panted violently.

"Yes—but don't get scared—Oh, Lord!—Be quiet—be a man, like me!"

"Murdered? Oh, Tim! Is he dead? Oh! Oh!"

"No—no—no! I didn't say it! I didn't say any such horrible thing! Nor I *won't* say any such thing! I say I don't know if he's been hurt a bit."

"But what's the matter with him? Tell me quick, Tim, or you'll break my heart! Give me the lamp! I'll go see for myself——"

"No—you needn't do it; he's gone!"

"Gone? gone, Tim! Don't tell me so! Ned gone? Then some one has torn him away by force. The letters! they're gone, too! Ned and his father's letters! I see it all, Tim. I know who did it! Run, Tim! Fly—fly for your life. Track them up in the snow. Don't stop—don't eat—don't sleep—till you bring him back. Good Tim—do this, and I'll bless you! A foster sister's blessing shall rest upon you forever!"

While she was uttering these sentences Tim was running in every direction about the room, as if preparing his limbs for a race.

"Where shall I go first?" he cried, at last, dashing to the door with the poker brandished in his hand.

"I'll go with you to the watchman," said Susan, "and then we'll see which course you must take."

Locking the door after them, they set out in the snow

in quest of the watchman, Susan uttering lamentations all the way, and Tim striving to comfort her.

They soon found the watchman, who knew both Susan and Ned. It so happened this time that he could give some intelligence of the boy. He had seen him in company with Mallex, whom he did not know—but supposed it was all right—enter a cab and drive towards Broad street.

“Here’s the track, almost filled up with snow!” said Tim.

“Yes; that’s the place where the cab stood. But what’s to pay, now? What’re you both in such a pickle about?”

“I’ll foller it, Susan!” said Tim, with the poker lifted over his head, “to the other end of the earth, but I’ll bring him back. Don’t be dashed down. Go to sleep, and dream you’ve got him back. And when you wake up, may be he’ll be there. But if he shouldn’t be,” continued Tim, after a slight hesitation, and lowering the poker despondingly, “you must go and tell Mrs. Dimple what I’m away for, as I don’t mean ever to come back till I bring Ned!”

Saying this he darted away; and Susan, after pouring out her griefs into the ear of the sympathizing watchman, returned disconsolately to her lonely dwelling.

CHAPTER V.

NED’S CONFINEMENT AT JACK CADAVER’S HOUSE OF HORRORS—HIS ESCAPE.

MALLEX exerted himself to the utmost to dispel the misgivings that arose in the breast of Ned as the cab swept rapidly away. The driver had received his instructions in a whisper, after the boy had been lifted into the carriage. They rolled onward some ten or twelve squares, before Ned exhibited any symptoms of impatience.

"Is it not time we were there, sir?" he asked, modestly, of Mallex.

"Oh, no; the driver did not go straight to Mrs. Dimple's house. Didn't you hear what he said to me after you got in?"

"No, sir. I hope it won't be long before we get there."

"Not long. He asked me to let him drive by his employer's stables in Locust street, before he went to Mrs. Dimple's. He merely wanted to leave a bucket there, which he had taken by mistake. I thought I heard him throw it off a minute ago. If so, it can't be long before we arrive at the mansion."

On they continued, with seemingly increased rapidity. After going at that rate for some ten minutes more, Ned, observing through the glass that they passed but few houses, and that the street lamps had entirely disappeared, again became restless.

"I wish he would stop!" said he; "I am sure we have gone far enough to be there!"

"I'll see," said Mallex, letting down the glass and thrusting his head out of the window. After gazing thus a few minutes, he put up the glass again, and said, in a merry tone; "It's all plain enough, now. It seemed to me, too, that he was a long time driving so short a distance. Tim wouldn't wait for us, and the sleigh was gone. Don't you hear the bells?"

"I've heard sleigh bells ever since we started, until now; I don't hear any now."

"Oh, but I did, when the glass was down. Mrs. Dimple's sleigh is ahead of us, and our driver is trying to overtake it. He will do it, too!"

"Mrs. Dimple's sleigh?" asked Ned, with eagerness.

"To be sure, I know it by the black horses, and Tim's white coat."

"Tim's coat is blue."

"Not now; it is covered with snow. Our driver knew him and his horses, and sleigh, too."

"But ain't we out of the city, now?" Didn't we come out Broad street?"

"Yea. Mrs. Dimple, you know, owns a farm and a cot-

tage out here. No doubt we will have fine sport to-night."

Ned did not know anything about the cottage. But he knew nothing to the contrary; and so he remained pacified some ten or fifteen minutes more. He then, as if by a sudden impulse, let down the glass himself, and thrust his head out.

"What do you see?" asked Mallex, placing his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

"Nothing—there is no sleigh ahead of us!" said Ned, in tones of vexation.

"Let me see," said Mallex, gently pushing the boy aside. "I understand it," he continued; "the sleigh has gone the fastest, and turned the lane. I see the house. We'll soon be there."

"Let me see it," said Ned. He did see a very plain looking, old, sharp-roofed building in the direction indicated. The cab soon turned into the lane, and was driven up to the house.

Telling Ned to remain a minute in the cab, Mallex sprang out and knocked at the door, which was instantly opened.

"Your name is Cadaver?" asked the broker, stepping into the house, and confronting the resurrectionist.

"Yes, that's my name; and Dr. Castor says its my nature."

"It was Dr. Castor who told me where you lived. I dined with him yesterday, and he described your business.

"I'm going in with a load to-night. I have enough subjects, now. They don't give me so much for them this cold weather, as they used to, and I must pay less to others. How many bodies have you got?"

"One."

"Only one? Was he killed, or did he die?"

"He is alive."

"Alive!"

"Yes."

"What did you bring him here for, then?"

"To dispose of him."

"I'm no Burke, sir! I follow an honest calling. Dr. Castor is a religious man, and says it's no harm, but a

benefit to science, to furnish bodies for the medical college. You must know, sir, that folks die fast enough nowadays from disease, and from accident, to say nothing of suicides, and now and then a wind-fall from the gallows, to supply the demand at the colleges. I thought you wasn't a regular one. I buy most of my subjects from the darkies."

"How much do you pay for them?"

"For choice ones, I give from ten to fifteen dollars apiece."

"And how much do you get for them from the doctors?"

"For choice ones, in good season, when there isn't much competition from the east, they pay me about fifty per cent. profit."

"That is, from fifteen to twenty odd dollars each."

"Thereabouts."

"Well. Now, instead of selling you mine, I will pay you twenty dollars to take him off my hands."

"Is he a man?"

"No, a boy, and delicate at that."

"But there's no use in talking about it, if I understand you correctly. Burking's a thing I never think of, and what's more, I never will think of it. That's certain."

"You don't understand me. I do not require you to take his life. All I ask is, that he shall never come back to the city. So long as he is kept away, I will come out and pay you twenty dollars every Christmas. But if he should die in the natural way, you know, upon letting me hear of it, by addressing X. Y. Z., at the post-office, I will send you one hundred dollars."

"It's a bargain," said Cadaver, after a pause. "Bring him in. I'll hand him over to my old woman."

In the meantime, Ned had become painfully anxious. He feared he had been deceived, and that his conductor intended him some evil. He had an impulse to spring out of the cab and attempt making his escape. But, as Mallex had said, he was truly a delicate boy. Susan had reared him as tenderly as his parents could have done. He was ignorant of the vile pursuits of his species, and scarcely equal to the performance of the hardy undertakings and

desperate resolves, which other boys of his age, differently raised, might have accomplished. He had neither suffered from cold, nor known what were the unsatisfied pangs of hunger, since he had been rescued from the house of refuge. Yet he had read of ill treatment to poor orphan boys. And now, it flashed upon him, that he was really to encounter dangers, and undergo sufferings, to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

"Driver!" said he, timidly.

"Well, Miss?"

"I am no Miss, but a boy."

"A boy! not a girl in boy's clothes? That's a good one!"

"Driver, do you know the gentleman's name who brought me here?"

"No."

"Do you know whose house that is?"

"No."

"Do you know Susan Meek, who lives in Pecan alley?"

"No. I don't know anything in the night, when I'm on excursions like these. The gentleman paid me not to know anything. I'm a know nothing."

"Oh, me! I'm afraid I'm lost!"

"I guess you've travelled before o' nights."

"No, indeed. Good sir, if he don't take me back with him, I beg you will drive to Pecan alley, and inquire for Susan Meek, and tell her where you left me. She will give you a dollar, I know."

"Come, Ned, jump out?" said Mallex, approaching the door of the cab. "Why, what are you crying about? Be a good boy. Nobody intends to hurt you. This is a better place than that filthy alley. It was necessary to bring you here. Never mind why. Don't tremble so!" he continued, placing the boy's hand in Cadaver's.

"Oh, sir, why did you deceive me?" cried Ned. "I never injured you, nor any living mortal in the world. I will never do any body any harm. Pray, sir, do not kill me!" he continued, yielding submissively to the thin tall-faced old man who led him towards the house.

There was a scowl of triumph on the brow of Mallex

The rest of his features were, however, much concealed by his profusion of hair. Even the end of his curved nose was lost in the sandy integument on his lip.

"Nothing will hurt you, Ned, if you don't cry. Drive off, now!" he added to the cabman, as he sprang into the vehicle. The next moment the wheels were rattling swiftly down the lane, and Ned was conducted into the house.

"What is your name?" asked the wife of Cadaver, a little, wrinkled old woman, thrusting her sharp nose into the boy's face.

"Ned Lorn, madam. Oh, I hope you are too good to do me any injury! Haven't you some children?"

"No!" she replied, in a sharp voice. "I never had any, and I never wanted any. I wonder what any body wants with them; they eat up the meat and the bread, and does no good. There is too many of 'em in the world, for these are hard times. You are one too many," she continued, in still more grating tones, turning and sweeping some strips of white muslin into the fire, while Ned stood trembling before her. "You shouldn't 've been born; or you should 've died, and gone to the doctors, before now. That's all such little brats are fit for. Well, you're here now! And you won't trouble your dad any more, I'll be bound!"

Meg Cadaver had overheard the colloquy between Mallex and her husband.

"Meg," said her husband, "I must go now and hitch the horse to the sled. It's time I was off. Give the boy something to eat, and let him sleep till I come back."

"Go and hitch your horse. I'll take care of the boy. If his own dad wouldn't keep him, I should like to know what I should feed him for?"

"Indeed I am not hungry, or sleepy either," said Ned, when the old man withdrew.

"You aint, hey?" continued the old woman, sitting down near the blazing fire, and again surveying the fair features of the unhappy boy, who still stood in the middle of the room.

"No, good madam."

"I'm not such a good madam as you think. But you may set down on that stool, and warm yourself."

"Thank you, madam!" said Ned, looking gratefully in her face through his suffused eyes.

"What's your daddy's name? What did he cast you off, for!"

"My father's dead. That man was not my father."

"Then what did he bring you here for?"

"I do not know. I never saw him before to-night."

"Did he take you away from your mother?"

"Oh, no; I have no mother. She, too, is dead!"

"Hoity toity!" exclaimed the old woman, in a tone somewhat softened. "It's a riddle. Property is at the bottom of it. You're in somebody's way——"

"I didn't know it," said Ned, springing up and looking behind.

"I didn't mean that. I mean that you stand betwixt somebody and some property; and when you're put out of the way, he can get at it. So you see you children have no right to come intruding into this world in such hard times. Why, chickens is a dollar. You're nasty little intruders—that's jest what you are!"

"Oh, good madam, if you will send me back home, I will give you all the property I have in the world. I havn't anything but some books, and some presents Susan made me."

"You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know what you've got. It's property—and a sight of it, I'll be bound."

"I'm ready, old woman," said Jack Cadaver, opening the door of the back room a few inches. "Why, Meg," he continued, "you hav'n't put the boy to sleep; I see him setting there by the dog-iron."

"No. Shet the door, Jack; I'll do it in a minute," said she, turning to Ned. "Boy, if you won't eat, I s'pose you can sleep. It's time all such little intruders as you was asleep. Take this lamp and go up stairs, turn to the left, and creep into the low bed."

"Oh, if you please!" said Ned, "don't send me up there by myself. Let me lie down on the floor in this room, and I won't give you a bit of trouble. Your good husband is going away, and I'll be company for you. I'll

tell you nice stories, if my aching heart will let me; and I'm sure you won't scold me."

"Throw him a blanket, Meg—and a pillow," said Jack.

"Here, then; now go to sleep in a minute," said the old woman, doing as her husband had requested.

Ned spread the blanket on the floor, not far from the wall, and laid down.

After waiting a few moments for him to get asleep, the old woman crept away softly with the light. For a brief space of time all was still. But Ned could not sleep. In vain he lifted up his little hands, and repeated the Lord's prayer with an earnestness such as he had never felt before. In vain he uttered the old nursery rhyme:

"Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take."

He could not sleep. And he feared that he might die before morning. But he determined, if possible, to remain quiet, and avoid giving offence to the old woman. Presently he heard the following dialogue:

"Is the sled close to the door, Jack?"

"Yes; jam up agin it." The horse was heard snorting near the side door of the rear room in the yard.

"Won't he be frightened?"

"I don't see why he ought to be, more than when he has a load of pork. They don't smell, this cold weather."

"Make haste, then. I'll help you to take out the big one. You can carry the little ones yourself."

"Take hold of his feet, Meg. He's frozen as stiff as a poker! Ain't he heavy?"

"Mercy on me, Jack, I can't lift him!"

The moment after a heavy substance was heard to fall with a dull sound.

"Try it again, Meg! Put your arms around his legs, and hug 'em tight!"

"Wait, Jack; I'm out of breath! Don't talk about hugging! This is the heaviest man we've ever had. What was the matter with him?"

"Appoplexy, the doctors say. I've taken 'em two or

three of those fat ones, and that's what they said they died with. It's caused by rich living, eating and drinking."

"Jack, *we* won't die with it, then."

This caused the old man to laugh.

"No *we* don't live high enough for that. But I'll make 'em pay extra for this feller. He's the kind they like. They say they cut such one's heads open, and look at the brain."

Again the old couple were heard staggering under the weight of their burden. Ned's curiosity to see what they were doing became irresistible. The room he lay in was dark. The only light in it came from the sinking embers in the fire-place. He crept noiselessly to the partition door, and peeped into the room illuminated by two lamps—the one the old man had with him, and the one the old woman had taken. Upon the floor he espied several human bodies lying in a row, and a very large one slowly disappearing through the door opening into the yard, borne by the panting old couple. They were shrouded and bandaged, as they had been deposited in their graves; but their gloves and stockings having been removed, their naked feet and hands were exposed.

Ned sank down chilled with horror. He knew not how long he lay prostrate beside the door. After the old man had departed, he was found by Meg, still lying there.

"Now that's what you've got by peeping at things that didn't consarn you!" said she, dragging him towards the fire. "Why, your hand is almost as cold as a corpse's."

"Oh, let me go! Don't touch me with your hands if you please!" cried Ned, recovering.

"Fiddlestick! The corpses are cleaner than dead hogs, because they wash 'em better. What's the use to be frightened at 'em? I'm used to it. But I never killed anybody, even if I could get a hundred dollars for it. You needn't be afraid. Them people died at their homes, and better homes than mine. The doctors will pay us for 'em. We didn't dig them up, nuther."

"Oh, if you will only please to let me go out," said Ned, looking towards the door communicating with the passage. "I will sleep in the snow!"

"You are a little fool. 'Twouldn't take more nor an

hour to make you as cold and as stiff as a corpse—" She paused suddenly, as the thought of the hundred dollars flashed upon her. "No, 'twont do!" she continued. "We should be suspected. And they say there is no difference 'tween murder and letting a child die hisself."

"Let me go, if you please!" continued Ned, with unwonted animation in his eye, as the thought came upon him that he could follow the track of the sled all the way (he knew not how far it was) to the city.

"I won't do any such thing! I'm not going to be hung in my old age for any such brat as you! Go, lay down. Go, I say! Go to sleep, or I'll put you in the back room, where there's one or two left for to-morrow night."

Ned threw himself down on his pallet, shivering with terror. But no sleep visited his lids. He lay there, mentally repeating the prayers which Susan had taught him, and watching the motions of the old woman.

Meg soon became oppressed with drowsiness; and after sitting for some length of time with her eyes fixed upon the sinking embers, as if in meditation of a plan to dispose of the boy, she began very deliberately to remove her outer garments preparatory to lying down. She had been compelled to stagger through an embankment of the drifted snow under the pressure of her horrible burden; and it was now her care to remove the dampness from her shoes and stockings. The former she drew from her feet, and placed them upon the warm hearth; the latter she hung up on either side of the fire-place.

Poor Ned could not but be reminded of the time when he too had been in the habit of hanging up his stockings at Susan's fire-side. And this, too, was Christmas eve! How cheerless and dreary for him! What a contrast to the comforts and endearments he had been accustomed to!

With such reflections as these, there came an idea into his mind, prompted doubtless by some pitying angel, that the little wrinkled old woman before him, might not be able to detain him there if he were once boldly to assert his determination to leave the house. But whither could he go, if he were to make his escape on such a night as that? No matter. He did not even think of what might become of him, or befall him, when once beyond the purlieus of that

detestable abode. His teeming thoughts only pointed to the means of escape; and every moment that now elapsed strengthened his resolution to make the attempt.

After nodding in her chair, and uttering unconsciously many disjointed remarks, having reference to the dreadful business of the night, and to the unexpected possession of the boy, Meg arose suddenly, and grasping the lamp exclaimed: "Hoity toity! where does this cold wind come from? I must have left the outer door open when Jack druv off."

She passed into the room where the dead were deposited, in her bare feet, for the purpose of remedying her supposed neglect. Ned then rose up and buttoned his overcoat. His cap and shoes had not been removed. Turning to the door leading into the passage, he gently raised the latch and passed through. He groped his way along the dark narrow passage to the front door. It was locked, and the key had been removed! He then retraced his steps and sought the door in the rear. This was bolted and barred very securely. He drew back the bolts, and commenced removing the bar, which was an iron one. Just then the old woman was heard.

"Boy! where are you? What did you git up for? Gone! You little rascal, I'll skin you alive if you try to git away!"

Her naked feet were heard patting along the floor. She ran into the passage with the lamp in one hand, and a heavy cane in the other. But her vision being very defective, she had traversed the greater portion of the distance to the front door before discovering that the boy was not there, and that the door was quite fast.

"You little wretch, you!" she exclaimed upon turning, and beholding Ned at the other extremity of the passage. "I'll beat you to a jelly, if you don't go back and lay down!" she continued, approaching her victim.

Ned had removed the bar by the time she came within striking distance of him. But instead of submitting, although unable to open the door which turned inwards, without the risk of being prostrated, he brandished the iron bar threateningly, and declared he would defend himself.

"Come back, I say!" screamed Meg, really intimidated

by the glowing eye and menacing attitude of the brave boy.

"I will not!" said he; "you have no right to keep me here. If you strike me, I will strike you back. You had better keep off!"

By this time the old woman's feet pained her. They were turning blue with the cold. She stooped down a moment and placed her hands upon them. To do this she had to relinquish the cane. Then Ned opened the door and sprang out.

"Seize him, Tiger!" exclaimed Meg, following him into the yard, and plunging with her naked feet into the snow. A ferocious short-nosed brindled bull-dog issuing from a box, confronted the appalled child. The animal, growling, displayed his formidable teeth. Ned was upon the point of suing for mercy, when he discovered that the dog was chained. The clouds had passed away, and the moon was now shining brightly. He perceived that the dog had advanced as far as the chain would permit him, and there was still space sufficient for him to pass round the house without being within his reach. The boy, unheeding the old woman, stepped slowly along near the wall, and apparently with presence of mind and great deliberation.

"If he tries to bite me, I will strike him!" said Ned, still brandishing the iron bar.

"I'll unlock the chain!" said the old woman, rattling the keys in her pocket. But in her agitation, after she had found the right one, her fingers being benumbed, it fell from her grasp into the snow. She suffered much from the coldness of her feet, and could not have patience to search for the key with the requisite diligence. These were precious moments, not to be lost. Ned vanished around the corner, and was soon traversing the narrow lane with all the fleetness of which he was capable.

He followed the track of the sled. He knew that if he pursued it long enough, it would lead him into the city. He had no disposition to sleep. At every bound his spirits arose and his resolution was strengthened.

CHAPTER VI.

TIM'S VALOROUS ADVENTURES.

TIM TRUDGE, with his eyes fixed on the faint marks of the wheels in the snow, scampered away out Broad street. More than once his career was near being cut short by the sleighs he met on the road. Deaf to all sounds but the imaginary cries of Ned for rescue, and oblivious of all danger but that which he fancied to be threatening the poor boy, he plunged forward regardless of the consequences. Had not the vehicles he met, in several instances, diverged quickly from the course they were pursuing, he must infallibly have been run over.

His speed seemed to increase the farther he ran. Once or twice the watchman's rattle was heard, and he was pursued as one escaping from justice. All who followed him were soon distanced. One sturdy guardian of the night, meeting him, aimed a blow at his head with his heavy mace. Tim dodged it, and with a skilful back-handed stroke, leveled his assailant. He did not so much as turn his head to ascertain what injury his poker had inflicted, but sped on without the slightest perceptible diminution of his velocity.

When the streets were left behind him, he was attacked by the dogs of the farm-houses. These he disposed of as he had done the watchman. And as he progressed, he observed with great satisfaction that the marks of the wheels were not so nearly obliterated, or concealed by the falling snow, as they were when he first set out in pursuit. The clouds were becoming ruptured, and occasionally the glimpses of the moon briefly illuminated his path. Already the stupendous fabric of marble, looming up like some deserted heathen temple of the east, capped with eternal snows, was left behind. Silent as the voice of departed ages, and frowning in the gloom of monumental mockery, it had neither charms nor terrors for Tim. Ned was his polar attraction; his heart the needle. And it was as true as steel! The bounty of Girard might feed and clothe

the orphan; but Tim traversed the highway in quest of him.

It was when descending the road beyond the great pile alluded to, that Tim was startled by a human voice.

"Get out of the way, or I'll run over you!" cried a man, passionately.

"No, by gosh!" cried Tim, looking up, and discovering it to proceed from the identical cab which had been described by the watchman. He seized the reins; but the horse struggling violently, and even setting back his ears and attempting to bite him, he aimed a blow at his head with the poker, which instantly stunned him, and he fell to the earth.

"Blast your infernal eyes! What do you mean?" exclaimed the driver, descending from his seat and bestowing a blow of his whip on Tim's head.

"Take that!" cried Tim, striking him down with the poker.

The door of the cab flew open, and the astonished stock-jobber stepped out.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he demanded.

"Ned! I want Ned! and I will have him, if I have to kill all the men and horses in creation! Where is he? Tell me quick?" demanded Tim, with the poker brandished.

"He's not here," said Mallex.

"Where is he, I say?"

"Why, Tim! You impudent scoundrel! didn't I send you for a book?"

"Yes, and your man at the office kept me there, while poor Ned was took away! Where is he, I say? Don't say another word, but tell me. I'm a madman, now! I'm very dangerous!"

"Put down that stick, you rascal!" said Mallex, endeavoring to seize it. It did come down. But it fell with such force upon stock-jobber's head as to prostrate him.

"Now, Ned! come, boy!" cried Tim, rushing to the door, and looking into the cab. It was empty. Tim started back, and without looking at his enemies, who were recovering from the effects of his blows, set off again at his accustomed pace. He heeded not the execrations which were uttered after him. His sole object was the

recovery of Ned, and he felt certain that the marks of the wheels would conduct him to the place where he had been conveyed.

The snow had ceased to fall. Star after star shone down encouragingly upon Tim, as the few fleeting clouds passed away. And the moon added its brilliant rays to the stellar illumination. All was silent as the grave, save the muffled sounds of Tim's feet as he coursed along the road. A hare, now and then, skipping along the hedges, was the only animate object which greeted his vision for many minutes.

At length he met Cadaver, with his sled-load of subjects, going to market. The contents of his vehicle were covered with straw.

Tim seized the bit of the skeleton of a horse, and asked the old man if he had seen anything of Ned.

"I don't know any boy by the name of Ned," was the equivocal response.

"Did you see any boy brought out this road to-night, in a cab?"

"I am always seeing boys and cabs too, on this road. Let go the horse."

"I won't. If you've seen the boy, and won't tell me all about him, I'll keep you here all night. I'm a madman, now! Don't fret me. I'm dangerous!"

"If you think I have him in the straw for the doctors, you may look for yourself," said the old man, somewhat intimidated, and unconsciously betraying the nature of his business.

Tim, struck with the remark, could not avoid coming to the conclusion that the straw actually concealed human bodies; and the idea that Ned might have been murdered, to swell the number of the subjects, banished the horror that at first possessed him. With his poker he removed the straw, and gazed upon the sickening spectacle.

"No! He's not here!" said he, retreating a few paces backward. "Go on, you old hyena, you! You are just fit for such a business as this. Drive fast, or I'll pitch you back among the corpses!" Cadaver involuntarily whipped away.

Tim was really metamorphosed. Ordinarily he was the

most inoffensive creature in the world. But the loss of Ned had maddened him completely. On he sped, grinding his teeth in rage as he ran.

With his head hanging down, and his eyes fixed upon the track before him, he ran next against a pedestrian he met in the way, and both were prostrated, but neither were injured. The heavy garments in which they were enveloped, and the soft embankment of snow upon which they fell, saved them from being hurt.

"Who are you? I'm a madman!" cried Tim, seizing the other, but not seeing him, for his cap had been thrust down over his eyes.

"Oh, please don't hurt me! I'm a poor unhappy boy, who has been taken away from home, and have just escaped from my cruel enemies!"

"Gracious! Goo—good Lord! Oh, Ned! Is it you?" cried Tim, hugging and kissing the boy.

"Tim! 'Thank Heaven!'" cried Ned. He was unable, for several moments, to utter another word. Tim lifted him in his arms, and started back towards the city in a run.

"Put me down, Tim; I can walk or run, either, now. You are panting with fatigue. I knew you would hunt for me. Oh, Tim, I'm so glad I've found you!"

"No! I'm not tired. I'm as strong as an elephant, Ned! Don't get down. I'll carry you all the way back. Won't Susan be glad! We'll have a merry night, Ned!"

"Oh, Tim! after what I have seen this night, I couldn't be merry, if it was to save my life. But I'm thankful. I thank God, and you, Tim! I thought I was lost!"

"Don't say it! Don't think about anything disagreeable, Ned! Be happy, if you can. If all the world turns agin you, you will always have two friends, ready to die for you—Miss Susan and me. We must wake up Susan, (if she's asleep, and that's impossible,) by sort of degrees. If we pop in on her sudden, she'll have 'istericals. We'll have cake, and candy, and cider, and a merry Christmas. All the things we've seen and done to-night, we'll talk about as a joke. And the bright fire will be so cheerful and comfortable to us, after our helter-skelters in the snow! Won't it, Ned?"

"Oh, yes! But, Tim, I'm afraid they'll get me again! They'll never rest, till I'm put out of the way!"

"Jest let 'em say to me you're in anybody's way, and I'll make 'em taste this poker! Where is it? I've lost it. It makes no odds now, I've got you, Ned."

Thus they conversed, sometimes uttering congratulations, and at others forebodings, for half the distance back to the city. But Ned would insist on walking a portion of the way, although it was quite evident that he was hardly equal to the undertaking, after the revulsion which had taken place in his feelings upon meeting so opportunely with Tim.

It was just when they approached within sight of the suburbs of the city, that a cab was seen driving towards them very furiously.

"Tim," said Ned, "perhaps they may have some other boy in that cab, and one who may not have so good a friend to seek after him as I had."

"If I was sure of it," replied Tim, "I'd stop 'em." But Tim's violent exertions had rendered him incapable of any such achievement, notwithstanding he was so unwilling to own that his strength was nearly exhausted.

But if Tim was not destined to arrest the progress of the cab, under the suspicion that some poor victim was forcibly imprisoned within, at least it seemed disposed to stop of its own accord. It was the same cab and the same driver he had before encountered. But instead of the stock-jobber, it now contained two burly policemen, who descended from the step, and laid violent hands on both Tim and Ned.

"What are you doing this for?" asked Tim.

"You'll find out to your cost, when your trial comes on," was the reply.

"What has Tim done? I know he is innocent of anything wrong!" said Ned, weeping.

"Then he ought to be cleared," said one of the officers.

"And of course he will be," said the other.

"What're you takin' Ned for?" asked Tim. "Nobody thinks the little boy's been guilty of any crime. Let him go back to Susan, and I shan't care what's done to me."

"We obey orders," said the policeman. "When you

are called up before the mayor, you can tell your tale, and the witnesses can tell theirs."

They drove to the state house, and the prisoners were conducted to the east wing, where malefactors of all grades and sexes were temporarily confined.

Ned's and Tim's hands were interlocked indissolubly. They would not be parted. In vain the boy was told that he might go home. He did not believe them. He had been already bitterly deceived. With tearful eyes, and mute tongue, he rejected all the offers they made him, and clung the closer to Tim. Tim folded him in his arms, and lay down upon some straw which he found unoccupied in a corner of the subterranean apartment. Utterly overcome by the excitement and fatigue of the night, Ned slept fitfully in that foetid atmosphere.

The next morning, the mayor, punctual to the hour allotted for such business, occupied the chair of justice. A most astonishing number of culprits awaited his decision. It is always so at such seasons. The old and the young, male and female, black and white, crowded the dock. But of all the group of offenders present, none presented such innocent faces as Tim and Ned. Ned still clung to the hand of his friend, and would not be separated from him. All the world might unite in pronouncing Tim guilty; they might send him to prison; they might take his life; but Ned would not forsake him, knowing him to be innocent. And indeed Tim's countenance was serene enough. It was broad daylight now; and instead of shrinking from the gaze of the spectators that filled the room, he rather courted their scrutiny. This was not an indication of criminality.

But if Tim's honest face was an index of his heart, and prepossessed the magistrate in his favor, what must have been the effect of the appearance of the slender child clinging to his hand, with pale, delicate features, tearful eyes, and a sad and mournful expression resting upon his mute lip?

His honor, far from being destitute of sympathetic impulses, found his attention irresistibly arrested by the picture.

"What have you been brought here for?" he asked of Tim.

"Because I would not let 'em kidnap and murder this poor boy, sir!"

Such an assertion, together with the melancholy expression of the boy, who seemed to adhere to the speaker as one would to a protector, caused a most extraordinary sensation in court. It produced a silence which the officers could not command.

"That is very strange," said his honor. "Who desired to kidnap and murder the child?"

"There's one of 'em, sir," said Tim, pointing to the driver of the cab, who appeared, with his head bandaged, as a witness. When the eyes of the people were turned towards him, he shook his head in denial.

"Who else attempted to do this thing?"

"Tother isn't here, your honor," said Tim.

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes, sir; 'twas Mr. Job Mallex."

This announcement created an excessive interest in the multitude, for the wealthy stock jobber was a man of fame in the city. He was, besides, on terms of intimacy with his honor. In short, he had the reputation of being a public spirited and very charitable citizen.

"This is most extraordinary," said the mayor; "are you aware of the consequences of slandering an eminent individual, whose character, so far as I am informed, is without stain!"

"If your honor 'll give me the book, I'll swear to it!" said Tim.

"What object could he have?"

Tim was not prepared to answer that question. He could not himself clearly conceive how Mallex might be interested in putting the boy out of the way. He hesitated. Ned whispered something in his ear, and then he spoke as follows:—

"Ned says, the old woman who keeps the dead people for the doctors, told him they wanted him out of the way, to get some property that belonged to him."

"The old woman who keeps dead people! My friend, I fear you are deranged. Do you speak, sir!" he con-

tinued, addressing the cabman. "Perhaps you can throw some light on the subject."

"Oh, please don't think Tim is crazy!" said Ned. "He tells the truth. Please, sir, believe what he says!"

"We will hear all you can say, presently, my lad," replied the mayor. "Swear that man. Now, sir," he continued, gravely, addressing the driver, "I warn you to speak the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; for remember, if you swear falsely, you may have to atone for it in the penitentiary." The hangdog looks of the man had made a very unfavorable impression. But the warning words of his honor were not without their effect. Whatever might have been his purpose before, he now determined to testify faithfully to what he knew, and to give a truthful account of the occurrences of the preceding night, so far as he saw them. There was no sufficient inducement for him to do otherwise.

It so happened that there were several medical students brought before the mayor that morning, for being rather too boisterous in the street during their holiday exhilarations. These young gentlemen had secured the services of Mr. Persever, a young lawyer of rising reputation. Mr. Persever, while regarding the beautiful features of Ned, beautiful even in dejection and distress, had been seen to drop a tear. He was poor himself, and had tasted of the bitter cup of ill-treatment and injury. He, too, had been an outcast, and deserted by those who had partaken of the bounties of his family. Hence he was often the champion of the friendless, and friend of the poor. The wrongs he had suffered, had likewise cast a sadness over his pale features. But his lofty forehead, and his brilliant eye, indicated the genius within, which was destined to triumph over obstacles.

This gentleman undertook the defence of Tim; and his cross examination of the cabman, together with the testimony of Ned, rendered it incontrovertible that Mallex had been a participant in the transactions of the preceding evening. It appeared that Ned had been induced by him to enter the cab, and that the driver had been instructed to drive rapidly out of the city. That although the boy had made no resistance, when going into the vehicle, yet he

had manifested his fears and suspicions to the driver, before getting out of it; and had implored mercy, and exhibited symptoms of terror, when taken against his will into the farm-house.

The remainder of the account given by the cabman related to the conduct of Tim, on the road, and to the employment of two officers by Mallex, to pursue and overtake the offender.

Tim, when questioned privately by Mr. Persever, admitted that so far as it concerned himself, the cabman had spoken quite correctly.

But the narrative of Ned, ingenuous and coherent, although the scenes he described made so great an impression upon his sensibilities, when recalled to memory, that the tears ran down his cheeks in streams, was regarded with absorbing interest by every listener. Even the most hardened malefactor present looked on him with pity, and experienced a thrill of horror at his description of the scene at the farm-house.

"This is the most astonishing story," said the mayor, "that I have ever heard."

"And I trust you will regard it merely as a fiction," said Mr. Radley, a burly middle-aged lawyer, who had been sent thither by Mallex, but who was apprehensive that his employer had not acted judiciously, in placing his victims in a position where their narrations were sure to be heard and appreciated.

"May it please your honor," said Mr. Persever, rising deliberately, though with difficulty repressing the storm of indignation which struggled in his breast, "it is impossible that this tale of the poor boy should be a mere fiction. And, if he had no friend to protect him, but the prisoner, who will not own that he had sufficient justification for acting as he did? The witness to the violent assault in the road, admits that this boy was conveyed out of the city, in the night, and forcibly placed within the farm-house—or rather the disgusting charnel house—the mere contemplation of which was sufficient to have deprived him of his senses, if not of his life. Well, Tim Trudge, having followed the track of the carriage, and knowing a cruel outrage had been committed on the poor lad, upon confront-

ing the guilty parties, acted only in defence of the child. It is true, the boy was not then with them; but he did not know it, and he could not know it, until he had vanquished his enemies. He meditated no violation of the law; there was no malice prepense; but, on the contrary, he was the champion of innocence, the opposer of oppression, and the vindicator of an outraged orphan child. From the testimony we have heard, and by the admissions of the cabman, the prosecuting party, in this instance, I have no hesitation in saying, is the guilty party."

"What's your name, my son?" asked the Mayor, whose interest had increased and deepened with the progress of the investigation.

"Ned Lorn, sir," said the boy, turning his expressive eyes full upon the officer who had addressed him in so kind a tone.

"You have neither father nor mother?"

"No, sir."

"And have been taken care of by this man and his foster-sister.

"Yes, sir."

"Why do you suppose Mr. Mallex desires to put you out of the way, as the old woman at the farm-house told you?"

"They say, sir, it is to get my property—and the letters."

"What property? What letters?"

"My dead father's property, and the letters written by my uncle."

"You have an uncle, then?"

"Yes, sir; but I have not seen him that I know of for a long time; though Susan says he is now in the city."

"What is his name?"

"Eugene Bainton."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the mayor. "I know him well. I have known him long. I know that the only nephew he ever had is dead!"

"Let us not be precipitate, your honor," said Persever, "in our conclusions. We know, at least I do, and others do, that Bainton and Mallex are partners, and joint operators in the stocks, embracing very large transactions."

Tim had drawn near to his counsel, in obedience to a signal from him, and communicated all the intelligence in his power in rapid whispers.

"Ned!" said the mayor, rather sternly, "Mr. Bainton had but one sister, and no brother. His sister, Mrs. Parke, died a number of years ago, leaving but one child, a son who now lies buried at — cemetery. I have seen his monument, erected at the expense of his uncle, Eugene Bainton. It is so stated on the marble. How, then, can you be his nephew?"

"Please, sir," said Ned, "I tell you only what I know, and what has been told to me. They say my full name is Edward Lorn Parke, but Susan had me called Ned Lorn."

"Lorn was the name of Mr. Parke's maternal ancestors," said his honor. "But it is idle to prolong this business. If you were really the son of John Parke, who married Miss Bainton, the present Daniel Lorn Parke would, likewise, be your uncle. Do you know him?"

"No, sir!" said Ned, gazing curiously at his honor. "But I have heard Susan speak of him."

"I fear, my lad, your pretended friends have made you their dupe, for some wicked purpose. The day I read the inscription on the monument, Mr. Daniel L. Parke was with me. Although he spoke in no friendly terms of Mr. Bainton, yet I remember distinctly, that he owned his little nephew had been buried there. And he remarked to me, that, so far as he knew, he had not a surviving relative in the world. As for the story about property, it is well known that John Parke left none. Everything he had in the world, was seized and sold by his creditors."

"True, your honor!" said Mr. Persever; and although his faith could not but be shaken by the statement he had just heard, he added, "yet it is equally notorious, that the two brothers, Parke, were ruined by Mr. Eugene Bainton; that they were induced to place their fortunes in hands of Bainton who had no capital; and that he is now rich, and the parter of Mallex."

"That may be. But it is not a matter for my decision. Time is passing, and I must hear other cases. An assault has been committed; at least, the evidence is such as to

warrant me in committing the offender, for trial before another tribunal."

Mr. Radley arose, and instead of pushing his advantage against poor Tim, astonished every one by an attempt to have him set at liberty.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Persever, with unwonted vehemence. "I feel convinced that the things I have heard are not all a dream; and I am not willing to see the means of unravelling the mystery set aside. An irresistible impulse impels me to investigate the matter. Your victim has been committed for trial. So be it!"

"But if he believed he was engaged in the rescue of the boy, although he was undoubtedly mistaken, I cannot desire to push matters to extremity with him."

"Ay; you will not appear to prosecute; and doubtless the witness against him will not be there to testify. I tell you now, if this be so, an action will be commenced against Mallex and Bainton. Against the former for seizing the child; against the latter, for his conduct at the house of Susan Meek!" Tim had informed him in relation to the letters.

"Oh, if it is the intention of the defendant to become the assailant of my client, rather than lay down his arms," said Radley, "we shall not relinquish our vantage ground, but press for his conviction."

And at that moment Dr. Castor entered. He said he had just left the bedside of Mr. Mallex, whose head was badly wounded. He had some fever, and his case might prove a dangerous one. The blow must have been inflicted by a bar of iron, or some other heavy instrument, falling under the denomination of a deadly weapon.

"Then the prisoner must be confined," said the mayor.

Mr. Persever whispered something in the ear of Tim, who acquiesced in the advice given him, and seemed quite willing to be conducted by the officer to the untried department of the Moyamensing prison.

"I will go, too," cried Ned.

"No, Ned; don't! Let me go alone, there's no danger, now. Do you go to Miss Susan," said Tim.

"Oh, no, they'll catch me again! They'll never let me go home."

"Tim will soon be released," said Mr. Persever; "and will go with you to Susan's house."

This decided Ned. From the moment he had first looked at the face of the young attorney, he had been willing to believe whatever he might say. So, relinquishing the hand of Tim, he drew near his new protector.

A fine was imposed on the rollicking students, and then they were discharged. But before Persever withdrew with Ned, the mayor took occasion to admonish the boy to abandon the idea that he was the son and heir of his deceased friend, and to be careful that his friends did not lead him into the commission of impostures and crimes, which would result in his disgrace and ruin.

Poor Ned could only reply by a deprecating look. He manifested no disposition, however, to retract anything he had said; and his honor, chagrined that his admonition had produced no acknowledgment of his error, and yet feeling touched at the forlorn condition of the handsome boy, suffered him to depart.

And in truth the testimony of his honor himself, as well as that of old Mr. Parke, given out of court, seemed to throw a cloud of suspicion over the child's story.

But Persever resolved to inquire further into the business; and in despite of the professional taunts of Radley, who congratulated him upon his success, and wished him much joy of the friends he might find in Pecan alley, he pushed his way to the door, with Ned's hand clasped in his, and departed in quest of Susan.

As they were crossing Walnut street, and about to enter Washington Square, Ned heard his name mentioned. On turning, he beheld the "Blue Maria" passing. It was poor Tim's voice.

CHAPTER VII.

EXCITEMENT AT MRS. DIMPLE'S—CONSOLATORY VISITORS
TO PECAN ALLEY—NED'S RETURN.

SUSAN had not slept during the night. At early dawn she had hastened to the mansion of Mrs. Dimple. Her tidings spread dismay through the household. Betty, whose silly communications had contributed to involve Tim in his difficulties, was painfully shocked. She was in love with the coachman, and hoped some day to make him her husband. The news soon reached Mrs. Dimple, who sent for Susan to come to her chamber. For the names of Bainton and Mallex had been mentioned in connexion with the abduction, and both those gentleman had recently manifested indications of a purpose to seek the rich widow's hand. They had not, of course, communicated to each other their intentions; and they were rival suitors, without as yet being aware of it.

Susan, however, was gone before the message could be delivered. She could not tell what moment intelligence of her dear boy might come to her house in Pecan alley. Although nearly frantic at her loss, she had not yet relinquished all hope of seeing Ned again. She had uttered too many prayers for his preservation and prosperity, to suppose that Providence would permit him to be utterly destroyed.

Alice, when she heard what had taken place, after sitting in abstracted silence for so long a time as to induce her mother to inquire particularly into the state of her feelings, said, laconically, that she was ill. She was fearfully pale. Her alarmed parent strove in vain to arouse her into a state of hopeful cheerfulness. She demanded to be put to bed, and was gratified. The family physician was sent for, but could find no symptoms of disease. There was a prostration of the spirits. But for this how could he prescribe?

When Susan returned, she found Mr. Mulvany, the deacon, at her door. They entered together. Amidst a copious flood of tears, Susan poured out her griefs. Mr.

Mulvany, who had conceived an ardent affection for the devoted protector of his little protege, truly sympathized with her. And besides, the loss of Ned could not but be a source of misery to himself. So it was a double blow to him. He felt for the distress of Susan, and he lamented the abduction of the boy.

Mr. Mulvany had been himself a poor orphan boy. But his fair face, kind disposition, and activity of mind, attracting attention at the Sunday school which he attended, he had been patronized by some wealthy ladies, and sent to college, where he was to be prepared to enter the ministry. His education was completed with honor to himself, and credit to his patrons. He had been ordained a deacon, and being a most excellent reader, was employed by the rector of the parish to assist him in the services at the altar. His salary, as usual, was small, but having no family to support, he contrived to live, and enjoyed the satisfaction of reading prayers every Sunday before the kind friends who had taken the poor orphan boy by the hand and placed him in a position to be useful to others.

Mr. Mulvany sought for comfort at the only true source. Both of the bereaved friends of Ned offered up prayers for the preservation and restoration of the poor boy they loved so well. And they seemed to derive consolation from a firm conviction that He to whom their humble supplications were addressed, possessed the power, and would be likely to have the disposition, to grant their reasonable requests.

When this devout scene was ended, a knock at the door attracted their attention. It was Mr. D. L. Parke, the gray-haired lawyer, and uncle of young Parke, if indeed the nephew still survived. Susan had despatched a message to him early in the morning.

"Where is he? What is the matter with the boy?" asked the old man, with much animation, and, for the present, partially relieved of his asthma. He did not pant so much as he had done the preceding evening. His discovery of facts which might produce a most desirable change in the circumstances of his family, then supposed to be upon the eve of extinction, had wrought a wonderful effect upon

his system, imparting a vigor and activity which he had not experienced for many years.

"Gone! They have taken him away, sir!" said Susan, feelingly, but submissively.

"Ah!" said Mr. Parke, sitting down gravely between Susan and Mr. Mulvany. "Child," he continued, but without the marks of despair upon his features, "what did I tell you? Did I not say you should be careful?"

"Oh, sir, they came and took him away when I was with you. Mr. Mallex was at Mrs. Dimple's, and learning that Tim Trudge was to come here to stay with Ned during my absence, obtained Mrs. Dimple's consent to send him somewhere else, and he did not return until Ned was gone. Mr. Mallex and Mr. Bainton, one or both of them I am sure, seized Ned, and carried him away."

"Very well! Don't make yourself ill. I am glad to see you here, Mr. Mulvany. You see I know you. I admire the correctness of your reading, and have heard something of your history. Come as often as you can, and comfort poor Susan. Her affliction is unaffected—she is sadly stricken. But I am not cast down. This occurrence is but one of the acts in the drama of life. All the world's a stage. Start not at the theatrical allusion. Let mawkish devotees, the pedantic moral teachers, who only think evil of others, do that. This occurrence lends vigor to my body, and elasticity to my mind. It is something tangible. It is a thread in the web to be unravelled. There is work to do, and I have the will. But I must have an energetic coadjutor. Let me consider and decide who it shall be."

"If I might answer——"

"No. It must be a lawyer, Mr. Mulvany. One who has been in contact with bad men; and if he has been their victim, it will be all the better."

"Oh, sir!" said Susan, somewhat disappointed at the apparently slight effect the loss of Ned seemed to produce on the feelings of the aged lawyer, "I have not told you all. They rummaged the black chest, and carried off the letters."

"Aha!" cried Mr. Parke, with triumph, if not delight, expressed in his manner. "Deuces and trays merely—we

have the aces! The game is not in their hands, as they suppose. My dear child, it was a most lucky thing you brought me the two letters last night. Fortune, or luck, is not entirely adverse to us, even if they do possess the boy.

"Pardon me, sir!" said Mr. Mulvany, "but might it not be the hand of Providence, which rescued the important letters, and separated them from the rest?"

"It might be, sir; probably it was. I am a believer in special providences, and that God directs and controls our thoughts and actions to a greater extent than the world is aware of."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so, sir."

"Oh, sinner as they take me for, and as I undoubtedly am, I can go farther than that. I believe all the church teaches, and would be a member, were it not for the conduct of the ministers."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mr. Mulvany, in undissembled amazement.

"It is true. I acknowledge one baptism. And I could have no difficulty in renouncing the vain pomps of the world; but I cannot allow the ministers to decide for me what they are. Your principal, last Sunday, said we must not go to soirees, parties, operas, &c., nor indulge in worldly amusements. I am fearful all this sort of preaching is worse than nonsense. Is it not wicked? Or, at least, an injury to the cause he is bound to serve? He said, for members to indulge in them, however innocent they might be, in themselves, manifested an inconsistency, and afforded a pernicious example. Then, in the same sermon, he uttered eulogiums on the characters, the lives and deaths of several distinguished public individuals. It so happened that I had played cards, visited the theatres, and drunk wine with two of the great men he eulogized, perhaps more than a hundred times. Where, then, was *his* consistency? But the men he praised were Christians, nevertheless. There are hundreds of thousands of good Christians, Mr. Mulvany, who would be members of the church, if your ministers would let them. But they will not be convinced that the object of life is merely to traverse a narrow penitential path, with an iron railing on either hand, from the cradle to the grave. God has made the world beautiful.

Fruits and flowers abound, and we have tastes for their enjoyment. And we have talents for literary achievements; for intellectual delights; to be impassioned, to be quiescent, to be sad, to be merry. They were not given to be shoveled pell mell, undeveloped and unenjoyed, into the eternal grave. Is not the everlasting picture of the sombre habiliments of death, and the horrors of hell, held up to our gaze, to blanch our cheeks, and to cause us to relinquish the goods of this world, for the benefit of the church—but a vile mockery of the greatness and goodness of a bountiful God? It is impossible but offences must come. The most rigid sin continually, in thought, word or deed. Nothing but charity, and continual forgiveness can save any of us. But those who blindly follow the priests look upon us with aversion, and we look upon them with disgust. We are at enmity, as the priests say they would have us. We know that our little peccadillos, venial in themselves, are no worse than their malignant thoughts, evinced in their uncharitable conduct. While they consider good men—good, if they could see their hearts—vile outcasts from heaven, because they witness the performance of a good play; the good men often view them as the victims of delusion—the miserable dupes of a cunning priesthood—living sacrifices upon an outraged altar, and hardly worthy of a respectable standing in the world, where their Creator placed them. No, Mr. Mulvany; let us not widen the breach. Let us make it honorable, respectable, genteel, to be members of Christ's church, and then additional millions will flock to it. Let us not be sallow monomaniacs, with fury in our eyes, boiling passions in our hearts, and detraction upon our lips. Let us be cheerful Christians—charitable Christians; honoring God by thankfully enjoying his infinite bounties, whether in the fruits of the earth, or in the entertainments of the mind; and resorting to the fountain of forgiveness whenever we err, which must necessarily be very frequently. We cannot avoid sinning too much: but don't be always telling us, we mustn't eat, drink, slumber, laugh, play, smell, see, or hear, under pain of future damnation, and the present displeasure of the priests. And don't demand too much of our wealth, under the plea that it is sinful in us to keep it, for you may con-

vict yourselves by receiving it. By pursuing the policy I have suggested, I verily believe, your numbers would be doubled. On the other hand, by the present system, one might believe that the ministers only wanted subservient automaton, and were really striving to prevent a glorious accession of free and rational members."

During the delivery of this lengthy speech, Mr. Mulvany listened in irrepressible astonishment; and at its conclusion, it might have been a question if his mouth was not as wide open as his eyes. It was different from anything he had ever heard before; and, in truth, he had not mingled much with the people of the world, except among the poor and miserable, whom his sacred mission made it his duty to attend. He did not reply. He did not know that he could refute all the arguments, or controvert the statements, of his experienced friend. In short, he was no controversialist.

"Do not be amazed, my young friend," said Mr. Parke; "what I have just spoken was not meant for you."

"I'm sure it wasn't!" said Susan, interpreting the lawyer's remarks as being designed to censure certain irascible ministers, and anxious to screen Mr. Mulvany from participation in the denunciation.

"You must both forgive me," added the lawyer. "It is a habit with me, when in pursuit of evidence, to rest for a time upon a newly found link, and, holding fast to it, launch my thoughts into some other channel. I am satisfied we shall overtake these iniquitous gentlemen. They have been guilty of a crime; and sooner or later, they must atone for it."

Susan uttered a scream of delight and ran to the door. She had caught the sound of a well known voice. The door flew open before she reached it. The next instant Ned was in her arms. Lifting him up, she ran to an extreme corner of the room, holding him fast, and pressing him to her breast, as a mother would a darling child. She laughed; she wept; and Ned did the same. They seemed to be in a delirium of ecstasy.

"A happy Christmas to you!" cried Mr. Parke, upon hearing the boy's name repeated. And upon looking a moment at the gentleman who accompanied Ned, and who

remained standing near the door, he exclaimed, "Persever! my dear boy, what brings you here? You came with the lad? Come, sit down. You are the one I want. You stand in need of profitable business, and mine may prove to be such."

"*You* here, Mr. Parke! And can it be possible that Ned there is your nephew?"

"My nephew? Ah! let me see. Bring him here, Susan. Upon my life there is a strong resemblance of my poor brother. I was twenty years older than my brother, and can remember distinctly his features, when he was no older than this handsome lad. I tell you the resemblance is perfect! I would be qualified to it," he continued, holding Ned by the hand and surveying him from head to foot.

"Are you my uncle, sir?" asked Ned.

"Yes—that is, I hope so, my dear child," replied the old man, placing his hand affectionately on his head.

"But he might resemble your brother, and even be his son," said Mr. Persever, glancing at Susan, "without being your brother's heir."

"Yet he would be my nephew!" replied Mr. Parke, with emphasis. "And since I have seen him, I am resolved to be his friend and protector!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Ned.

"And he will need one," said Persever; "and if one will not suffice, he shall have two. I, too, will watch over him, for he has enemies. But why should he have enemies?"

"The boy may recover the fortune of his father; and you shall have a slice of it, if you render me your assistance," said Mr. Parke.

"Cheerfully! But then the evidence I have heard in relation to the death of your brother's son, affords no cheering prospect."

"True enough!" said Mr. Parke. "I recollect seeing my nephew's monument, and reading the inscription!"

"Oh, believe me, it was not Ned they buried there!" cried Susan. "I can prove it! I can swear it was not Ned who died at the house of refuge."

"I'm sure I didn't!" said Ned.

This declaration produced a burst of laughter from the two lawyers, and a fit of coughing for the eldest.

"If I am old enough to be a witness, I can tell the judge of all I saw and did when they put me in that place, and how Susan got me out. She took me under her gown!"

"I did so!" said Susan.

"Well; keep your memory fresh, both of you," said Mr. Parke. "You will no doubt be called on to testify. And keep your doors locked, when no friend is with you."

Persever then related everything which had transpired before the mayor, and repeated all the evidence that had been offered.

"Oh, poor Tim!" cried Susan. "They've got him in prison!"

"I forgot he was your foster-brother—else I should have suppressed a portion of my narration," said Mr. Persever.

"He is safe, child," said Mr. Parke, "and will be made comfortable. He is a brave fellow, and shall not be forgotten. No injury can befall him there. There are too many witnesses. And when it may be deemed necessary for him to come out, there is a potent instrument, called *habeas corpus*, which we may obtain, that will answer the purpose. But I must have a consultation with you, Persever. Give me your arm. Farewell, farewell!" he said, to all that remained, and departed abruptly with his young legal friend.

The news of the disappearance of Ned had made quite a stir in the alley. The inhabitants in the vicinity had sympathized sincerely with Susan, and uttered many execrations upon the abductors. But above all the rest, perhaps little Tommy Denny, a lad of about the age of Ned, appeared to be the most excited. The possibility of such a thing as carrying away a boy of his years, had never occurred to him. Tom had never the slightest intimation to whom he had been indebted for his own existence. He had been found in a basket, and taken in and supported by Mrs. Workman, the wife of a carpenter living opposite to Susan. Having no child of their own, they kept the poor boy. But at the age of ten, Tom; who had led a hardy life, was able to support himself. He was a

"news-boy," and supplied Ned with his unsold papers at cost. Occasionally they played together at Susan's house, and an attachment had grown up between them.

When Tom Denny had learned that Ned had returned, he hastened to Susan's house to welcome him back. And he determined to greet him with a handsome Christmas gift.

"Huzza, Ned!" cried he, running in, with a noisy parrot perched on his wrist. "I'm glad you've got back, Ned!"

"Thank you, Tom; but what did you bring your parrot for?"

"I'm going to make a Christmas gift of him to somebody."

"Indeed! Who to?"

"Take him, Ned!" said Tom, presenting the bird.

"Polly wants her breakfast!" said the bird.

"He don't," said Tom; "he's had it."

"Oh, Tom!" said Susan, interposing. "I can't afford it. Ned will thank you, and be just as grateful as if he had received it. But I cannot afford to provide for the parrot. Ned must be educated, and all my money must be saved for that purpose. I must buy books. Take him back, Tom; that's a good boy."

"Yes, I thank you, Tom. But Susan can't afford it," said Ned. "When you have sold your papers, come and spend the day with me. We'll have a merry Christmas; and I'll tell you of my wonderful adventures last night. They'll make you stare!"

"And I will be back after the morning's service," said Mr. Mulvany. "In the meantime, Susan, I think it would be well for Ned to sleep an hour or so. He has lost much rest, and is paler than usual."

Ned was not averse to it. He had been gaping, and stretching his arms apart, ever since his return; and it was feared the reaction, after the scenes of excitement he had passed through, might have an injurious effect upon his health.

CHAPTER VIII.

LAWYERS *vs.* THE ROGUES.

MR. PARKE and his young friend called at the widow Dimple's, and gave that lady the information they possessed in regard to Tim.

"Can he not be got out of prison?" asked the animated widow, (who was not more than thirty,) after listening attentively to the narration of Persever. "I will be his security for any amount of money. I know him to be honest and truthful."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so, madam, because the testimony of others this morning seemed to throw a shade of doubt upon his statement. But if you can vouch so emphatically for his veracity, and bear witness of his good character, it will go far towards bringing him off with flying colors."

"I can do so, and will do so, most freely and conscientiously," replied Mrs. Dimple. "And I hope you will oblige me, Mr. Persever, by undertaking to procure his liberation immediately."

"That I fear would be impossible, madam," said the young lawyer, "because, as I have said, Dr. Castor declares the one whom Tim assaulted (Persever had hitherto avoided mentioning the name of Mallex) is in danger, and may die of his injuries."

"Dr. Castor! Why the good man declares that every little ailment is a serious matter, and would tell you that the scratch of a needle might be dangerous. No doubt he was requested to make the statement, and did it to oblige some friend. Thus they impose on him. Did he make oath to it?"

"No; it was not deemed necessary."

"Pray who is this person, so dangerously wounded by Tim,—the most inoffensive creature in the world."

"Shall I tell her?" asked he of Mr. Parke, in a whisper

"You cannot avoid it. Her curiosity is roused, and she must be satisfied.

"Mr. Job Mallex, madam."

"Impossible! Why, it was Mr. Mallex who sent him off on some errand last evening, since which time I have seen neither of them."

"It is true, I assure you."

"Then Tim may be set at liberty; for I have a note from Mr. Mallex written within an hour, with an apology for not being able to accompany a friend to my house this morning according to appointment. He says an accidental fall, producing a slight contusion on his temple, must prevent him from attending. But he declares that he suffers no pain, and is only withheld from coming by the ugly patch on his face."

The lawyers exchanged glances.

"Would you permit me to have possession of that note, madam?" asked Persever.

"I can see no objection to it, since I have told you its contents. Go, Alice, and fetch it from the card basket." Mrs. Dimple had sent word to her little daughter that Ned had returned to Susan; and Alice had risen immediately from her couch, quite recovered, and joined her mother in the parlor.

"This may possibly be useful," said Persever, on receiving the note from Alice. "If not, I shall not use it."

"Oh, do please get poor Tim out of the horrid prison," said Alice.

"I beseech you!" added her mother; "how, else, shall we have our drive to-day?"

"We will hold a consultation and do our utmost," said Mr. Persever.

The gentlemen then departed, leaving the widow in an agony of conjecture how it could happen that Tim should be the assailant of Mr. Mallex; and for what purpose that gentleman had undertaken to carry off poor Ned Lorn.

The two lawyers ascended to the diminutive room described in the first chapter, where they held a protracted conference.

It appeared that the two Parkes, induced by the glowing accounts of large profits to be realized in the south-

western trade, between American adventurers and the Mexican merchants, had invested large sums in merchandize, and entered into partnership with Eugene Bainton, who, although without capital himself, was to have one-third of the profits for his services in the superintendence of the business. Not only did the two brothers expend their money in the enterprize; they likewise became responsible for a considerable debt. A large amount of merchandize had been bought on credit. Liabilities had likewise been contracted for an outfit, consisting of wagons, stock, &c., with which to cross the plains.

Relying confidently on the talents and integrity of Eugene, for many months the eastern partners in the western adventure enjoyed the pleasing anticipation of speedily realizing a sufficient gain to meet all their desires for the remainder of their lives; and at the same time, they indulged the benevolent conviction that they were laying down a broad foundation upon which Eugene might build an ample fortune for himself.

But when the period arrived for the grateful return to be made, they received letters from their junior partner, informing them, to their dismay, that he had been under the necessity of disposing of his merchandize at Sante Fe, Chihuahua, and Sonora, at an enormous sacrifice. He said the country was filled with merchants; that but little money was to be had; that most of his sales were made in the first instance on credit; and that those whom he trusted, after disposing of their goods, had either lost the money at faro, or otherwise become insolvent, so that he could not collect anything. He went on to state how he had exerted himself to save all he could from the wreck of the adventure; how he had invested the money received from the few who had paid him the cash for their goods, in mules, which if he had succeeded in getting them safely into the United States, would have yielded an enormous profit, and might have covered the other losses. But unfortunately, they were taken from him in the night by the Indians. Thus he returned, as he declared, without funds, to St. Louis, Missouri, where he thought he should remain. There might be a probability, he stated, of receiving a remittance from the bankrupt Mexicans. They might win

it at the gambling houses, and send it to him at St. Louis, by some one of the caravans continually passing over the plains between Missouri and the Mexican states.

Upon the receipt of this intelligence the eyes of the brothers were opened. From information derived from the correspondence of other adventurers, who had reaped large gains, they felt that they had been made the victims of Bainton. He had been tempted, and yielded. No considerations of gratitude, no calculations of future consequences, had been sufficient to confine him within the limits of the path of honor. The crime had been committed, and they, although with untarnished reputation, were to bear the immediate penalty.

Their creditors being clamorous, they did not hesitate to make arrangements for the immediate surrender of whatever property they possessed to satisfy the just demands against the firm. It was while smarting under the effects of the cruel dishonesty of their junior partner, that Mr. John Parke had written to Bainton at St. Louis in regard to the wretchedness and ruin he had wrought; and in reply he had received the two letters (just before his death) which Eugene was so anxious to get into his possession. The first stated that he had taken the benefit of the bankrupt act, at St. Louis, as the western liabilities had been contracted solely in his name; and he had in this manner disposed of the unsatisfied demands in that region, as well as elsewhere, so far as he was concerned. But he hoped nevertheless, soon to surprise his brother-in-law with a remittance. For, in a fit of desperation, he had rushed to a gambling establishment in that city, and staked, upon the turn of a card, every dollar he possessed, with the resolution (as he declared) to blow out his brains, in the event of losing. But fortune smiled upon him. He won. He continued to play, and broke the bank. He did not state the amount of his winnings, but it might be inferred they were very considerable. This fund, so disreputably obtained, he had securely invested, so that no one who had claims against him (although they could make no legal demand) should know of its existence. But it was his purpose, "after matters were quieted down and smoothed

over a little," as he expressed it, to divide the proceeds of his good fortune with his brother-in-law.

The other letter, of a subsequent date, conveyed the important intelligence that a portion of their demands against the Mexican merchants, had been collected by the agent he had appointed to attend to his affairs in that country. This money had been sent to the Messrs. Morales, bankers in the city of Mexico, to be forwarded to New Orleans via Vera Cruz, and from thence it would be remitted to a house in St. Louis, subject to his order. Immediately upon its receipt, *Mr. Mallex* would pay over to the Parkes the whole amount. With many congratulations in anticipation of so joyful an event, Bainton concluded by assuring his brother in law, (and desired him to repeat the assurance to D. L. Parke Esq.,) that he was resolved to repair the injury his unfortunate expedition had caused, to the utmost of his ability.

Shortly after the reception of the last of these letters, Mr. John Parke expired, and was followed a few days subsequently by his broken-hearted wife. Mr. D. L. Parke himself, supposed to be almost in *articulo mortis*, had no information respecting the contents of these letters. Everything, but the black chest entrusted to Susan, seemed to fall into the hands of Mallex. He had received the proceeds of the sale of the estates of the Parkes. By some means he had come into possession of the notes of the firm. It was thought he had purchased them at a large discount; and all this, too, when it was known he had been, but a short time before, as destitute of fortune as Mr. Eugene Bainton himself. Having exacted the last dollar on the sale of the property, he could do nothing more, and hardly less, than to dispose of the bodies of his victims in decent burial. This done, he took Ned away, no one knew whither, until it was ascertained by Susan, and Mr. D. L. Parke, that under some pretence, and for some unexplained cause, the child had been sent to the house of refuge.

Such were the revelations made by Mr. Parke to his young auditor, who sat silently by, never once interrupting him, but attentively weighing every word and circumstance unfolded to his understanding.

"We have them!" he exclaimed, at length, when his senior had finished his narrative. "I can distinctly recollect to have heard one of the cashiers say that Mallex received a vast amount of his funds from St. Louis, when alluding to the stock-jobber's and bill-broker's history. No doubt the drafts had been deposited in his bank. Having this clue, however, we may ascertain with precision whether any remittances were received at the time alluded to; and I know of those who will be able to trace out the nature and amount of the investments of Mallex at any given time, or during any period."

"That might furnish us data," said Mr. Parke; "but the question is, how shall we be able to make them disgorge? That the story about the sacrifices, insolvent debtors, and robbery by the Indians, was altogether a false elucidation of a series of fraudulent transactions, I have no doubt. It was a deliberate swindle, and Mallex and Bainton have been partners in the iniquity, perhaps from the beginning. We must proceed with caution. You might obtain important information in Missouri. It might be advantageous even to cross the plains, and see the gentlemen with whom he had his business operations."

"True," replied Persever; "and I would willingly undertake the mission, were it not for the want of means. You are poor, and I, with a family to support, no better off. I have activity and energy, it is true, and contrive to live. But what would become of my little ones during a prolonged absence of their purveyor? I doubt if they would find even a Mallex to provide for them in my absence. And yet, my dear sir, I cannot bear the idea of relinquishing the pursuit of these bad men for a moment. They are prodigiously rich; or rather they possess a vast amount of money and property which should belong to you and poor Ned, if indeed the boy is the son of your deceased brother."

"I am sure he is—but, possibly, Susan's tale in regard to his mother——"

"May not be true," added Persever.

"Were it not for the hope of the recovery of his fortune from Bainton, I should not regret to find that the lad

had none of that man's blood in his veins," said Mr. Parke, being interrupted by a slight fit of coughing.

"I was about to propose an interview with Bainton and Mallex," said Persever. "It strikes me that with these letters, which, thanks to Susan, were timely separated from the rest, we might bring those gentlemen to terms as regards yourself. A portion of the money which, by Bainton's confession, was sent to the city of Mexico, and was doubtless subsequently received by him and transmitted to Mallex, justly and undeniably belongs to you as one of the partners in the venture. If they admit this, it seems to me it would not be bad policy for you to demand it, and to receive it. They cannot require from you a quittance of all demands; a simple receipt is all that will be requisite. It might even be well to manifest an apparent indifference in regard to any further investigation——"

"Right! My young friend you have cracked the shell—and the idea is full-fledged already! We will go as unsuspecting, humble friends, obliged, and grateful for any crumbs they may be pleased to let fall from their table. No snarling, no showing of our teeth—until the proper time."

"True, sir, that is the idea. We have to deal with dishonest men, with whom it is often wisdom to dissemble. At present we will not push for the identity of Ned."

"No, if we get anything, though, Ned shall have the benefit of it."

"Nor will we allude to the fact that other adventurers in the same expedition were successful," continued Persever.

"Nor drop a hint which may warrant an inference that we have the slightest particle of a design to pursue ulterior measures. My young friend, it was a lucky star that threw you in my way. Both being poor, our brace of rich rascals will naturally conceive the idea that they can stop our tongues by filling our mouths. Our humility will seem real, and not as the result of stratagem. We will be reasonable. A few thousands of our own money must content us as long as it lasts; and when it is expended, perhaps we may induce them to pay over another instal-

ment. Thus they will supply the ammunition to carry on the war, until the mask is thrown aside."

"Yes, sir. It would be too humiliating, I own, to pursue such a course, with any others than men lost to all principles of honor; but with these I conceive it to be altogether justifiable. A time will come for bold defiance and open warfare. Then we shall deal them the additional mortification of avowing the motives for our present conduct. We shall inform them that while they supposed us to be the dupes of their patronizing liberality, we were deliberately preparing the means for their effectual overthrow—an overthrow and retribution demanded by justice—we being the instruments employed for the accomplishment of her purposes."

Such was the decision of the legal gentlemen. This was to be the first step, and it was determined to put it in execution immediately. So they lost no time in repairing to the presence of the enemy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROGUES NO MATCH FOR THE LAWYERS.

THE two lawyers called first at the lodgings of Mallex, for the purpose of instituting proceedings for the release of Tim Trudge. It did not appear to them that his incarceration might result in any advantage to Ned; and from the note Persever had of Mrs. Dimple, it was to be presumed no obstacle would be interposed.

But they did not find the stock-jobber in. The servant informed them that he had gone to the dwelling of Mr. Eugene Bainton.

"This will afford us an additional pretext for appearing before Bainton," said Persever, as they left the door and turned involuntarily in the direction of Eugene's house.

"And I hope, by the time we arrive, he will have

examined the letters he found at Susan's house," added Mr. Parke.

"And will have likewise ascertained that the most important ones are missing," continued Persever. "If such should be the case, he will be the better prepared to answer our purpose."

When the legal gentleman arrived at the mansion of Bainton, they were shown into the front parlor; and informed that Mr. Mallex, for whom they inquired, would soon attend them.

After a short delay, during which the quick ears of the young lawyer could not avoid detecting a brisk colloquy going on in the adjoining apartment, the folding doors were thrown open, and both Mallex and Bainton advanced, and heartily greeted their visitors. The former really wearing over one of his eyes a green covering, but exhibiting none of the dangerous symptoms which Dr. Castor had described.

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Parke," said Bainton, after the first salutations were over. "I feared that the accidental and unavoidable misfortunes by which we suffered bankruptcy, might have estranged you."

After yielding to a protracted fit of coughing, the old man replied:

"It was natural for you to suppose so; and I will own that at first my feelings got the better of my judgment, and perhaps caused me to use some harsh language in regard to your conduct. But that is past; the storm has done its worst; and we can only pick up such fragments of the wreck as fortune may throw within our reach, and be thankful."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so!" replied Bainton, in good humor.

"Very well; get him out, then: I care not," said Mallex.

"So that's settled," responded Persever.

"What's settled?" asked Bainton.

"Oh, this affair of last night, I have been telling you about," replied Mallex.

"Ha, ha, ha! Mr. Parke, you have not been informed by your young friend of the ridiculous occurrences of last evening?" asked Eugene, apparently much diverted.

"Yes!" replied the old man, his face reddened either with laughter or coughing, both seeming to struggle for the

mastery. "And not only that, but this Susan has been to see me; and she had me at her house this very morning."

"Quite a Christmas adventure! And she persists in the absurd declaration that this Ned Lorn is my sister's child?"

"And my brother's! and between you and I, I am inclined to believe he is my brother's son, for there is certainly a tell-tale resemblance of John. But then as to the mother, that is quite a different thing."

"It is a preposterous thing! Peruse this certificate, Mr. Parke." Eugene had taken a paper from his pocket-book when the subject was first mentioned, which he now placed in the hand of the old lawyer. It was a declaration that Edward Lorn Parke, aged six years, had died of scarlet fever on a certain day therein mentioned; and was signed by the physician of the house of refuge.

"Nothing could be plainer!" said Mr. Parke, returning the document. "The fact that Susan was much with my brother's family; and having this boy, by what means obtained, the Lord knows best; afforded a coincidence, and furnished a face of probability for the scheme. A box of letters, too, it seems, had been confided to her care by my brother. I was supposed to be in a dying condition; and you being absent, it was natural he should wish to keep them from falling into the hands of strangers."

"Of course!" replied Bainton, quickly. "They were written by me, and were mine; and I will own that I visited Susan's house last evening to demand them of her. She was absent. I found them, however, and brought them away. Did she not tell you that I had done so? And was she not in a violent passion upon missing them."

"She told me they were gone."

"I thought so!" said Eugene with a smile of triumph.

"And she supposed it was you, from the description of your person given by the lad, who returned while I was there. But she was in such raptures at seeing the boy come back, all other thoughts were banished from her mind. And, I must say, however, even before the boy returned, she did not lament the loss of the particular letters you obtained."

"Perhaps I did not get them all!" said Eugene, his visage becoming suddenly very grave. He rang a bell, and

directed the servant who appeared, to fetch him the letters on the table in his chamber. When they were brought in, he untied them with an unsteady hand, declaring he had not yet examined them, which was true. Mallex, too, seemed to be much interested.

"I think," continued Mr. Parke, "that Susan said the box contained all the letters confided to her, but two."

"But two!" exclaimed both Mallex and Bainton.

"I think she said so. And I have reason for believing so."

"Oh, indeed!" said Eugene, pushing the letters on the table aside, and ceasing to examine their post-marks. "Do you know—did she tell you—who had them?"

"Oh, yes. It seems she had the curiosity—and what woman has it not!—to read the letters. The two she separated from the rest she supposed might be of some value to one not named in the superscription. And she delivered them with her own hands to that person, last evening."

"And that person could be no other than——"

"Myself!" said Mr. Parke.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Mallex, pale, and evincing a most extraordinary degree of perturbation.

"Did the letters contain anything very remarkable?" asked Persever, addressing Mallex with perfect composure of features.

"Have you not read them?" asked Eugene, almost fiercely.

"Not I, sir!"

"I'm glad of it!" said Eugene, seemingly relieved from an unpleasant apprehension. "It is natural for one to evince a repugnance to having his private and confidential, or even business communications, subjected to the gaze of disinterested parties. But, really, there was nothing of special moment in the letters, as you, sir, can testify!" he continued, appealing to the sagacious old lawyer, with a signification in his looks and manner, easily to be comprehended.

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Parke, decisively, "or at most nothing unusual in the settlement of complicated business transactions."

"This way, if you please, sir!" said Eugene, rising and

beckoning Mr. Parke into an obscure recess in the back parlour, "I presume, sir," he continued, in a low tone, "you can have no desire at this late day to rake up before the gaze of the world any of our old affairs?"

"I have regarded them as finally disposed of these three years. If I had purposed to demand an investigation, the proper time would have been immediately after my recovery, and before the sod was green upon my brother's grave. Are you aware that the ruin of his fortune broke his heart? and that his death caused your sister's?"

Bainton turned his face aside, and said, after a pause: "It was a sad misfortune."

"It was, indeed," replied Mr. Parke. "And yet he had received your last letters before he died. It seems to me they should have revived him somewhat. In regard to these letters——"

"What do you propose?"

"Let us throw aside all affectation," said the old man, unable to dissemble further. "Your friend and partner, Mallex, knows what the letters contain—and so does my young friend Persever, although he has not actually perused them, as he stated. Let us have a full and unreserved discussion and settlement. Come in, gentlemen!" he continued, in a loud voice. "We all know the nature of this business: let us deal openly, and with perfect candour. I had thought to die peaceably and in utter destitution. The information the letters afford would seem to indicate that I am not without pecuniary means. I was a partner in the concern, and am entitled to my just proportion of the funds which were transmitted by the Mexican banker to the United States. This I humbly demand. Why, gentlemen," he continued, addressing Bainton and Mallex, "this is a very simple affair for you. For me it is only a matter of rejoicing and happiness, and not of defiance, menace and hostility. Give the old man a morsel of his own bread, and let him go with a light and thankful heart."

"I suppose your views will be responded to freely and cheerfully," remarked Persever.

"There will be no grumbling, no suspicion, no further demands?" asked Bainton.

"Have I been importunate? Am I one in love with

strife? or likely to engage in a controversy upon a baseless suspicion?"

"I think not!" said Eugene.

"We have not had cause to think so," said Mallex.

"Then you may not apprehend any useless vexations from me hereafter. I need but little here below, as the poet says," continued Mr. Parke.

"And may not need it long," added Persever.

"A third of the thirty thousand, mentioned in the letter," said Eugene, forgetting that he had omitted to name the amount in the letter, "will suffice you for a long time."

"With his habitual economy," said Persever, quickly, and striving effectually to conceal his internal rapture, at the fortunate inadvertence of the speaker. It had been a source of regret both to Parke and his young friend that the sum had not been definitely stated in Bainton's correspondence. They feared he would name an inconsiderable amount, and there might be no means of arriving at any other result. But now the treasure was revealed; the blank was filled up with most magnificent figures. They had never supposed, in their most extravagant visions, it could be so large a sum. But they concealed their inward joy so completely, that the individuals with whom they were treating never once doubted that the pen had previously recorded the few words of magical import which the tongue had so flippantly pronounced.

"And one-third of the thirty thousand you suppose will be a just proportion?" asked Mr. Parke.

"I suppose so. Will it be satisfactory?"

"I shall not express any discontent; but yield to your sense of what may be right."

"There may be some claims yet unsatisfied—some creditor not embraced in former settlements——"

"No, I believe not; said Mr. Parke, interrupting him.

"I think the sale of the effects of my brother and my own, satisfied the utmost demands of our creditors; but left us poor indeed."

"Your good name was left you," said Persever, smiling.

"Yes; and the poet thought it was of value."

"And the money mere trash."

"Let us not be diverted by jests, gentlemen," said Eu-

gene, gravely. "We are discussing matters of some importance, I take it. I feel disposed to do what is right and proper in this business. If claims should arise against the old firm, I presume I will not alone be held responsible, while there is another partner on the tapis. Therefore, I do not see why there may not be a prompt division of the assets in hand. And it must be allowed that a sufficient length of time has elapsed since these \$30,000 have been lying idle in your hands, Mr. Mallex, for any unsatisfied claim to be exhibited, if such were likely ever to arise."

"I agree with you in that opinion," said Mallex; "and I can testify that the money has been kept in readiness thus long expressly to meet such a contingency. It is a pity, however, that you did not suffer me to invest it. At simple interest, there would have been an increase of thousands."

"No matter. Take the pen and sign a check for one-third of the sum belonging to Parkes and Bainton." There was a cunning twinkle in the stock-jobber's eye as he took up the pen; and to prevent a significant smile from being perceptibly developed, he was under the necessity of wounding his lip with his teeth. Doubtless he thought that if he were to obey the command literally, there would be a restitution of a much heavier amount.

"It occurs to me, gentlemen," continued Bainton, while his eye followed the pen of Mallex, "that some might suppose Mr. John Parke's proportion of this money should be paid to his brother, likewise."

"That might be a question," said Persever.

"But I do not urge it," said the old man.

"My sister," said Eugene, "survived her husband; the personal property, in default of a will, became hers; and she being deceased, and I being her sole heir, it becomes mine."

"The lawyers did not demur to this; but rather suffered the speaker to infer that his argument was conclusive. They did not deem it prudent to intimate that the assets in question did not come into the possession of the intestate during his life, nor even into the widow's from whom Bainton claimed to inherit it. Nor did they drop a hint that the brothers Parke had furnished the whole of the capital

originally embarked in the adventure, and that Eugene Bainton, according to the agreement signed by the parties, was merely to receive one-third of the profits. They did not even deem it necessary on that occasion to inform the junior partner that in all settlements of such partnerships, it was the rule of law, of right, of universal custom, for the capital to be first returned to the parties that furnished it, before there could be any distribution of the profits. All these suggestions were suppressed, and Mr. Parke was too happy to receive the check for \$10,000, and sign a receipt, not in full of all demands, but simply for that amount.

When Bainton read the receipt, he seemed disposed to propose another form; but it was impossible for him to summon sufficient assurance to mention such a thing to the man he had wronged. Callous and unscrupulous as he was, he was aware that he could not even fabricate the shadow of a pretext for demanding a relinquishment of all claims upon any funds that might accrue to the benefit of the firm of Parkes and Bainton. And he likewise knew he was dealing with men whose forbearance was more to be desired than their enmity. Hence, after a slight hesitation, he placed the receipt in his pocket, without uttering any comment on the nature of its expressions.

Persever now desired to withdraw. He was apprehensive that if the interview were prolonged, something might occur to mar the advantage so happily gained. But Eugene would not permit it. He wished to discuss the subject of the young pretender, as he jocosely denominated poor Ned. Turning to Mallex, he said:

"We had better explain the other matter, now. There is nothing like making 'clean breasts' among men who have once differed, as a guarantee of future amity. Give us wine!" he shouted to a servant, and then continued: "We did resolve to get possession of this Ned Lorn, gentlemen, although, as you are aware, we had the official statement of the death of my nephew. But we supposed that the remarkable coincidences, and striking concurrences, of which you have heard, might, if the project of the woman were persisted in, give us trouble, and subject me to many annoyances. The mere announcement in the papers of such pretensions being set up, would be sufficient

to wound one's sensibilities, and might even injure one's credit on 'change. It would certainly cause me some painful embarrassment in the circle of my female acquaintances; because I happen to know that a lady whom I esteem, has long been very partial to this Susan Meek, and might be disposed to believe her story. These were our reasons. Drink, gentlemen!"

They did so. It was almost unavoidable. But as Bainton had not expected their presence, and had certainly given no whispered instructions to the servant that brought the wine, they felt tolerably safe from poison.

CHAPTER X.

AS EASY TO BE HAPPY AS MISERABLE.

A FEW days after the interview with Mallex and Bainton, Mr. Parke indulged in a protracted solitary walk in the western portion of the city. The check for \$10,000 had been paid. One tenth of the sum had been handed to young Persever, who immediately set out on his journey to the far west. During his absence the aged lawyer was to lodge at his house, and protect his family.

There was now a serious cast upon the old man's brow, notwithstanding the ray of good fortune which seemed to illumine his path. He could not perceive that his acquisition of money added to his happiness, accompanied as it was with a perplexing and complicated case of wrong and villainy on the part of others, whose crimes it was incumbent on him to expose. And he was troubled with the fear that Susan's story might possibly be a fabrication; not a vile invention, perhaps; but an unsubstantial woof, destined to vanish under the touch of the iron rule of law, and in the scales of exact justice. He pitied Susan; she might be the dupe of others; and he was reluctant to believe her capable of premeditated wrong. He felt an at-

tachment for the child; for he was a perfect counterpart of the brother he had so dearly loved.

With a grave and severe visage the old man turned from a fashionable street into the alley where Susan dwelt, and rapped at the door. He was admitted by Ned, who was radiant with joy upon beholding the tall, gaunt form of his aged friend.

"Ah, Ned! I'm glad to see you well, my boy!" said Mr. Parke, holding both hands of the lad, and gazing steadfastly at his fair face, until a rising moisture dimmed his vision. Then leading him to the table where he usually studied, he desired him to take his books to another chamber, so that he might be learning his lesson during the interview between Susan and himself. Ned obeyed with alacrity.

"Now, child," said Mr. Parke, when seated beside Susan, "I wish to recur to the subject of Ned's parentage. The boy haunts my midnight visions. Sometimes I see him in distress, appealing to me by the endearing name of uncle, to rescue him from destruction. At others he appears emancipated from the clouds of doubt and obscurity, smiling as a grateful comforter and supporter of my declining years. Tell me, as if you stood in the presence of your God, whether he is the veritable son of my deceased brother and of his deceased wife!"

"I call my Maker to be witness of my solemn declaration, that he is the living offspring of your deceased brother, and of his lawful wife, the sister of Eugene Bainton. I declare it with an upturned brow, and my eyes appealing to Heaven for the verity of my assertion. Oh, sir! why should I deceive you?" she continued, while tears trickled down her pallid cheeks. "There is no acknowledged tie of kindred between him and me. But I have loved, and do love him. I loved him, because he was abandoned by the world, and because I pledged my word to his dying parents to take care of him. Hitherto I have done so. And God has rewarded me. I have been repaid by the affection he has manifested for me, and by the serene consciousness within my breast of having faithfully performed my duty. I look for no other reward. I can have no other recompense, if his legitimacy be acknowledged,

and his fortune recovered. On the contrary, his associates must then be changed, and I must lose him. He will rise to a station superior to mine."

"You are mistaken, Susan. If what you say be established, if what you desire be accomplished, he will be indebted to you for everything. Were he to prove ungrateful, I should cast him off as an incorrigible reprobate. You will have acted a noble part. Your virtues and merits will have fitted you for companionship with the best and the highest in the land; and in this country all have an equal right to aspire to any eminence that may be achieved by superior merit. But I must inform you that the resident physician of the institution to which my brother's son was sent, has signed in due form a statement of his death. The time, the disease, and the place of interment, are exactly certified. And Eugene Bainton has had the body disinterred, and transferred it to —— cemetery, where a costly monument, with a flourish of inscriptions, attests the place of his final repose. How am I to be assured who is right, you or the doctor?"

"Heaven knows! I can only repeat what I have so solemnly asserted. The child had not been long in the institution before I stole him away. At that time the poor children confined there were dying daily of the scarlet fever. When I obtained admittance, several were lying dead. The cot next to Ned's contained a boy in the agonies of death. I had purposely made a dress of ample dimensions, which I wore on the occasion, and under its folds I contrived to steal the child away. This, before God, and before any judge, I am willing to avouch. And poor Ned will likewise swear to it, for he remembers distinctly so remarkable an occurrence. Oh, sir! might not the doctor have been mistaken! Might he not have witnessed the death of the little boy I have mentioned, under the supposition it was Ned? He had no previous knowledge of him——"

"It might be so, Susan!" said Mr. Parke, interrupting her. "It *must* have been so! Were he not of my blood, he would not mingle so much in my dreams! But this is my old superstition. And yet, Susan, if it be so—if it be precisely as you say—and as I believe—yet it will not

avail in law. The certificate Bainton holds cannot be combated in court, short of an ocular demonstration of its error; and that it would be impossible to produce, after the lapse of so many years. If the body of the child under the monument were exhumed, it would not now afford any evidence in our behalf. Nothing but a fleshless skeleton remains."

"It is very true. But, sir, so far as I am concerned, all I ask is to be permitted to work for Ned and to keep him near me. I'll answer for his education! But, alas! that reminds me he must soon lose his principal tutor, Mr. Mulvany, who is about to leave us! Oh, then, my fears that they will drag the poor boy away again, will ever torment me!"

"Fear nothing more, Susan. I will believe your statement. I am inclined to credit every word you have spoken in relation to his identity. At all events I will act precisely as if it were not controverted, and will watch over Ned's welfare as if I knew him to be my nephew."

"Thank you! God will reward you!"

"If any one ventures to molest him again, he will find it a perilous undertaking. But, as you say, his education must be attended to."

"Oh, yes; and although you may protect him from personal injury by the potent arm of the law, you are destitute of pecuniary means. Hence I shall have the satisfaction of providing——"

"No; no, Susan. You are mistaken. I have grown rich since we first met—indeed since we last parted. Bainton has paid me a large sum of money which he owned was justly mine. A much larger sum would belong to my brother's son, if we could prove he lived. But of that, more hereafter. You say Mr. Mulvany is about to leave the city?"

"Yes, sir," said Susan, her head slightly declined, and something resembling a blush mounting to her fair forehead.

"How far has Ned progressed in his Latin?"

"He has gone through the grammar twice, and is beginning it the third time."

"So! Mr. Mulvany builds on a sure basis."

"He is a very learned man, sir; he graduated at the Theological Seminary. He was poor—a poor poet's son, and was educated at the expense of some rich ladies. But he is grateful, kind, pious, sweet-tempered——"

"O, ho! don't confess any more, child!" said the discerning judge of human nature. "He is just the man to make such a woman happy. Here!" continued Mr. Parke, placing bank notes to the amount of \$500 in Susan's hand. "This money belongs to Mr. Mulvany. Tell him it is justly his due. Say that good works truly have their reward. And charge him not to regard me as a hopeless reprobate, notwithstanding my unpalatable sermon preached to him the other day. But where is he going, and when does he depart?"

"He is going to Summerton, sir, to be a teacher in the college there. He is to be paid \$600 a-year. As assistant to the rector here, he is only allowed \$400, and he thinks it is his duty to go."

"And I think so too."

"Oh, yes, sir. It is much less expensive living there. He can lay by something every year. But in the city, with his present salary, he finds it difficult to make anything."

"You are an economist, Susan," said Mr. Parke, smiling; "and no doubt you and Mr. Mulvany have talked these things over?"

"Yes, sir; he is my friend, and Ned's friend. We are almost like members of the same family. Why, sir, one half of Ned's books have been bought with Mr. Mulvany's money."

"And now Ned will have the satisfaction of repaying him."

"But he never expended such a sum as this!" cried Susan, looking at the notes in unaffected astonishment. "He won't have it! He'll give it to Ned. He never expected to be paid anything, sir."

"No matter. He must receive it, and keep it, too. And if his services and bounties have merited such a recompense, what will be the amount due you, do you suppose, Susan?"

"Not a cent, sir! I would be the most miserable

creature in the world, if any one were to suppose that my attentions to Ned were designed to merit a pecuniary reward. No, sir! Since my testimony has been controverted, I desire to vindicate my motives by forbearing to receive any compensation whatever, save the esteem and gratitude of the dear boy, and the confidence of his friends. I might now relinquish him into your hands; but I have determined to make a new sacrifice rather than resign him to any one, until his rights are acknowledged, both morally and legally."

"What new sacrifice, Susan?"

"No matter, sir; I would prefer to conceal it from the knowledge of the world, as it might cause some mercenary design to be attributed to me."

"But, child, recollect that I have never sympathized with the censorious world, in supposing there might be a possibility that your conduct was actuated by unworthy motives. Believe me, truly, to be your friend; one in whom you may safely repose your confidence; one with whom you should freely consult; and from whom you should withhold no secret, in which Ned may be directly or remotely concerned."

While Mr. Parke was thus speaking a deep crimson hue spread over the half-averted face of Susan.

"I will tell you!" she said, with something resembling a violent effort. "I will tell you, so that you may perceive that I speak the truth at all times, and under all circumstances. Mr. Mulvany has proposed to make me his wife, and take me with him to Summerton. It is my intention to decline——"

"No, no! Stop a moment, till this tormenting fit is over!" Mr. Parke then yielded to the demand of his annoying malady, which agitated his frame for the space of several minutes. "Now," he continued, raising his head, and smiling triumphantly, "it is over for a couple of hours at the least. No; you must not decline. It is an advantageous offer. Mulvany is a fine scholar. He is virtuous, amiable, modest, industrious—oh, I see you agree with me! Then why reject him?"

"I will not leave Ned for all the husbands in the world!"

"Devoted girl! But Summerton is close by—not an hour's distance by the railroad."

"And what might not occur any hour? What did occur during the hour of my visit to you?"

"When left by himself. But suppose he were to accompany you?"

Susan drew her breath quickly, while her eyes glowed with unusual brilliancy. Her lips were slightly parted, as she panted; and a smile of hopeful joy, struggling to vanquish her fears, imparted a beautiful animation to her features.

"Oh, sir! If it might be so—if you would consent to it——"

"I will; I do, child!"

"Bless you!" she cried, seizing his hand and kissing it, with grateful tears in her eyes. "Then Ned will be safe! He will be out of their reach. They will not know where to find him!"

"Sagacious girl! Your idea is correct. Let no one know whither he is to go—not even himself. For there is a mystery in this desire of his enemies to carry him off, which they have not explained to my satisfaction. They may renew the attempt; and we must not trust them. I leave you to break the news to poor Mulvany. Remember to be as secret as the grave. When everything is prepared at Summerton for your reception, you will have only to go to church, unostentatiously, you know, and then to the boat or cars. But we will confer again on this interesting subject. Send Mulvany to me. Ned shall no longer be a charity pupil. The full price shall be paid to the principal of the institution. Farewell! I have not had so light and merry a heart this many a day. Kiss Ned for me!" And Mr. Parke withdrew with an elastic step.

Immediately after the departure of the aged lawyer, was the arrival of Mr. Mulvany. He came with many misgivings. From the expression of Susan's countenance when his proposal was made to her, he felt convinced that she was upon the eve of pronouncing a negative response. Hence it was that he urged her to give him no answer then, but to take time to consider, and weigh deliberately all the arguments in his favor which might suggest themselves

to her understanding. But now was the appointed time. The hour had arrived for him to have a final answer; and he approached the presence of his mistress with fear and trembling.

When he entered he beheld Susan sitting in her low plain rocking chair, swinging backwards and forwards, like the pendulum of a clock. There was a cast of abstraction in her face, but her cheeks were not so pale as usual. Her hands hung down on either side. One of them held the five bank notes—each of the denomination of one hundred dollars—for Mr. Mulvany; the other held a solitary bill which Mr. Parke had contrived to insert between her fingers when she seized his hands. This was one of the red-lettered thousand dollar notes of the Philadelphia Bank. She had not seen it. She had even forgotten the others. Her thoughts were away at Summerton, where she was strolling in imagination along the green margin of the beautiful river, with her husband and Ned.

Mr. Mulvany stood before her in mute astonishment. He beheld no averted face, no downcast eye, no symptoms of rejection. There was rather an encouraging smile upon her lip, as she gazed at him.

"Sit down," said she. He obeyed in silence, with his eyes riveted on the bank notes. "Oh, you wonder where these came from, and who they belong to?" she continued, raising the hand which held the five notes. "They are yours. Ned's uncle left them for you——"

"For me, Susan?" asked the surprised scholar.

"Yes, for you—in payment for your services to Ned, in teaching him Latin. There; take them!" and she placed them in his hand, which however did not close upon them.

"But what is that note for?" he asked, looking at the one in the other hand.

"Which?"

"That!" said he, pointing at it.

"Bless me! What is this? Where did it come from? What is it, William?" She had never called him William before.

"Susan!" said he, "has any one been robbing the bank?"

"Mercy on us! Can you think it, William?"

"No! I can think no such thing. But, truly, this is a bank note for one thousand dollars. Is it Ned's money?"

"I know no more about it than you do, William."

"And, Susan dear, I know nothing of it whatever."

"It is strange, Mr. Mulvany, very strange! Oh, now I can guess! He must have slipped it in my hand and intended it for a present."

"Who, Susan?"

"Mr. Parke. Did I not tell you he left the other bills for you? He says he's rich. And no doubt he has left the other note as a—a—present for me!"

"What sort of a present, Susan? Tell me my fate now—don't think—only say what sort of a present do you suppose he intended it for?" and while he spoke he seized her unresisting hand.

"William! a wedding present!"

"*Dies Faustus!*" exclaimed the scholar, rapturously kissing her fair hand.

"Come, now, William, that's not right!" her face perfectly scarlet. "I don't know what your Latin means, and it's ungenerous in you to reply to my speech in a language I don't understand!"

"It means a lucky day, Susan. But if my tongue was not understood, you could comprehend the meaning of my lips. Oh, joyful day!" he continued, raising his hands and eyes aloft.

"Because fortune has bestowed some wealth upon us?"

"No! a fig for the money! But because I have obtained this hand!" said he, squeezing it between both of his, and then covering it with kisses.

"Then, sir, it seems you can hear and comprehend a consent which I am sure has not been spoken by me."

"But I demanded a reply. Your expressive silence was amply sufficient. I am a happy man, Susan. And you have not the heart to inflict pain on the lowliest human being."

"No, William. The time for hesitation is past. Henceforward our fates are to be united. The only obstacle that was in the way has been removed."

"I understand. Ned was the difficulty. Ah, Susan, if his uncle has removed him, I fear you will be unhappy."

"You do not understand me, now. He is to go with us—to live with us—to be your pupil still—and to carry money to the institution to defray all his expenses. But this must be whispered," said she, repressing her emphasis. "Even Ned must not know it beforehand, else he might be surprised into a betrayal of our purpose. Mr. Parke suggests it."

"No, Susan; let me beg you to tell him everything. After what he has seen and suffered, I will answer for his discretion."

"It will be a comfort for me to do as you say," said Susan; "and since you say it, it shall be done. Ned! come down, my sweet boy!"

Ned obeyed with alacrity.

"Ah, Mr. Mulvany," cried he, "I think I have mastered my conjugations this time. Try me!" He gave the book to his teacher, and recited his lesson without committing an error.

"All right—out again!" cried Tim, throwing open the door.

"Tim!" exclaimed Ned.

"Tim!" cried Susan.

And they both seized Tim's hands when he entered, and wept with joy.

"Oh, he's a good one! He's the best friend we've got in the world!" said Tim, sitting down near the fire, and holding Ned on his knee.

"Who do you mean, Tim?" asked Susan.

"The young lawyer—Mr. Perseverance, I think's his name. He's got a heart! Hasn't he, Ned? I saw the big tears rising in his eyes, when he looked at you, Ned. I knowed then we were safe. Lord presarve us! what'd become of you, boy, if it hadn't been for him! And I—I might've died in prison, if he hadn't got me out. The keeper said I was indebted to Mr. Perseverance for my freedom."

"Indeed, he is a noble young man," said Susan.

"And an excellent scholar," said Mr. Mulvany.

"Tim, did they give you enough to eat, and a bed to sleep on?" asked Ned.

"Yes; I must own they treated me very well. The

keeper received a message from Mrs. Dimple, to make me comfortable. And she sent me word she wouldn't ride out again till I drove her. She's a kind lady—but I'm a going to leave her!"

"Leave her! Why?" asked Susan.

"I'll tell you—but you must all keep it a secret. Betty brought the message to the keeper, and I saw her, and talked with her. Don't hang down your head, Susan. I know you would've come, if Mr. Parke and Mr. Perseverance hadn't forbid it; Betty's told me everything. She said she heard one of Mrs. Dimple's friends saying Mrs. D. was going to get married to Mr. Bainton or to Mr. Mallex." This was spoken in a low tone, and with the gravity of an announcement of fearful import.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" said Ned, who had listened with extraordinary interest.

"It cannot be possible," said Susan.

"It was Mr. Bainton who came here with Mallex," said Tim. "Mr. Perseverance told me. So he can't be my employer. If she marries either of 'em, I'm off. I wouldn't stay there for anything they could give me. And what's more, little Alice would die. Betty says she won't speak to either of them men since that dreadful night."

"And that is true," said Susan. "Ned and I were there yesterday, and she told us so."

"But what does Mrs. Dimple say to the conduct of the gentlemen?" asked Mr. Mulvany.

"I have not heard," said Susan. "But this I know; Mr. Parke and Mrs. Persever (who is a sweet lady) have visited Mrs. Dimple's every day since Christmas. I don't believe this tale of Betty Simple, Tim. If there were any truth in it, Mr. Parke—your true uncle, Ned—would not be so intimate with her."

"Betty does tell many things she hears that never comes to pass. I hope she's out of it this time. But I'll soon see. I must go, now. I haven't been home yet. I'll see you all again to-night. Good bye."

"Stop, Tim, cried Susan; "I have something to tell you."

"It'll do the next time I come. I'm in a hurry, now. Good bye."

"But it's something very, very important!"

"Wait till night."

"It may be in relation to another wedding in contemplation," said Mr. Mulvany.

"No 'taint. Betty and me's not engaged yet—though Alice and her mother, and Betty herself, wants it to be so. I'm in no hurry yet. Good bye—I can't wait another second." And, true enough, the next moment he was out in the alley, and hastening towards the mansion of Mrs. Dimple.

But before the lapse of fifteen minutes, during which time Susan had informed Ned of their future plans, with many injunctions to be prudent, and not to betray their intentions to others, Tim re-appeared before them.

"I'm back a'ready! It does my legs good to run, after being locked up so long. I come to tell you Mrs. Dimple's going to let Alice have a real juberly, as she calls it, to-night in the nursery. Mr. Parke's to be there—and Mrs. Perseverance. And all of you are invited—and nobody else. She says you must come, too, Mr. Mulvany—for Mr. Parke has been telling her something or other about you that makes her smile—the mother, I mean, not Alice. And when Mrs. Dimple smiles that way, she's always so kind to her servants, and to Alice, and in fact to everybody. She's the most condescendingist lady in the world. She's rich, but not always proud. Yet when the parlours are full of grand people, she can be grand, too, jest like a queen. Oh, there'll be fine times! Betty's been sent for cakes, and I don't know what else, and a row of bottles in the cellar has had the cobwebs brushed off, to make 'em ready for drinking. I don't know what a juberly means—but I heard 'em say it was for Ned. That's all. Good bye!" And before any one had time to address him, Tim was off again.

CHAPTER XI.

A HAPPY PARTY AT THE WIDOW'S, TWO OF THE GUESTS
EXCEPTED.

MR. D. L. PARKE had conversed frequently and fully with Mrs. Dimple on the subject of Susan and Ned, as well as in relation to his own and his deceased brother's business connections with Eugene Bainton. Stricken dumb at the intimations of improper conduct on the part of the two gentlemen — Bainton and Mallex — who were in the habit of making frequent and prolonged visits at her mansion, she remained for a time in a state of serious dubiety in regard to the solidity of the foundations upon which such suspicions had been raised. Although rich and fashionable, and fond of pleasure, yet she was not deficient in that species of intuitive intelligence, by which well-informed minds arrive at a clear perception of the motives and objects of frail humanity, and the derogatory means so often resorted to for the accomplishment of forbidden objects. Fortunately neither Bainton nor Mallex had made any impression on her heart. She could not avoid being conscious that their assiduous attentions were designed to make such an impression; but having yielded her heart completely to her deceased husband, she was enabled to view their advances with a cool circumspection which effectually guarded against the machinations so frequently employed by the sterner sex, to reduce the victims of their pretended devotions to a state of vassalage.

Susan had informed her that Ned was the offspring of deceased parents, who had been in the enjoyment of all the luxuries of wealth and the benefits of the best society. And she believed the poor devoted girl. She had known Susan for many years, even before Ned was born; she had seen her almost weekly during the whole term of their acquaintance; and in contempt of the insinuations that the poor girl was the mother of Ned, she had rather encouraged her visits, and those of the boy, at her mansion, than repulsed them. She was no imitator of others, who, without

investigation, acted upon the supposition that where there was a mere charge of disreputable conduct, there must be some degree of criminality, and contact with the implicated was to be avoided as a pollution.

But Susan had never mentioned to her the name of Ned's parents, and even suffered her patroness to suppose, in common with all the world, that the son and heir of the deceased John Parke had been consigned to the tomb. And, now, when the whole story was communicated; when the solemn asseverations of Susan were supported in no slight degree by the history of the business transactions of the Parkes with Eugene; the surprising strides to fortune and consideration by Bainton and Mallex—both having been destitute of capital but a few years previously—the recent mysterious attempt to remove the boy—the seizure of the letters, and the payment of \$10,000 to Mr. D. L. Parke, were, altogether, circumstances well calculated to fill the breast of the lady with emotions of an enthusiastic desire to protect the weak and oppressed, and to vindicate the rights of those who had been made the victims of a most inhuman and cruel conspiracy.

The suggestion that the physician had been duped into the signing of a certificate of the death of this unfortunate and unprotected child, was seized upon by the lady with the avidity of a tangible fact. In her mind there could be no doubt of the mistake, whether innocent or intentional. She was convinced. How could such an intelligent and well-disposed boy be sent to such a place, if it were not for the purpose of accomplishing some wicked object? There was not a boy in the institution of so amiable a countenance, of such gentle manners, and exhibiting so many evidences of having been tenderly nourished. How could such a boy live in such a place? It must have been known, it must have been desired, that he would soon die, if suffered to remain among such associates, and under such treatment as was practised there.

Such were not only Mrs. Dimple's convictions, but her repeated declarations in the presence of Mr. Parke. And while she uttered her expressions of horror and pity, her daughter Alice only wept.

This being the effect of the revelations at the mansion

of Mrs. Dimple, so far as Ned and Susan were concerned, it may be readily surmised that a corresponding change of sentiment was experienced in regard to the characters of their persecutors. Mrs. Dimple could no longer withhold the expression of her utter detestation of the characters of Bainton and Mallex; and even after she had given vent to a volley of bitter invectives against the presumptuous suitors who would have added her, and perhaps Alice, to the list of their victims, it was difficult for Mr. Parke to impress her with the necessity of a prudent abstinence from communications or actions which might defeat the ends of justice. He succeeded, however; and both the lady and her daughter, convinced that the welfare, and it might be the safety of Ned, depended upon a strict adherence to the line of policy pointed out by the aged and experienced lawyer, promised faithfully to be governed by his counsels. He had likewise informed his fair auditors of the contemplated marriage of Susan, and of the purpose to remove Ned to the school at Summerton. But even these facts were to be kept a profound secret.

It did indeed resemble a jubilation when the company, young and old, high and low, assembled in the nursery that evening. Songs were sung, and joyous laughter sounded throughout the halls of the stately mansion. The amused mistress was almost as gay as her daughter Alice; and the gray-haired lawyer vied with Master Ned in innocent merriment. Susan and Mulvany sat a short distance apart, conversing in half-whispered sentences, and exhibiting on their countenances legible marks of the happiness they enjoyed.

Alice had Ned to repeat over and over again many of the particulars of his escape from the clutches of the little old woman, who, though not willing for him to depart, yet persisted in calling him an intruder. And if she wept at the narration of his perils and sufferings, and turned pale at the mention of the horrible spectacle he beheld in the adjoining room, yet she could not avoid laughing heartily at his mimicry of the old woman's speech, and imitation of her gestures when standing in the snow.

But perhaps the most amusing feature of the evening was a slight quarrel between Betty Simple and Tim Trudge,

in an adjoining room. It seemed that upon the return of Tim, Betty had almost gone into hysterics of delight, and could not repress her anxiety to repeat to Tim the boundless affection she felt for him, nor avoid evincing in his presence an unaffected gladness to see him return in safety.

But honest Tim, indignant Tim, conceiving the idea that all his mishaps, and all Ned's sufferings, were owing to the silly tongue of Betty, who had poured such a torrent of information into the eager ears of Mallex and Bainton, only returned her enthusiastic greeting with coldness, and had even turned his back upon her. Being summoned to his mistress as soon as she heard of his return, he had been immediately after despatched to Susan's house, as we have seen; and no explanation had taken place between him and Betty until they met at night in the little room adjoining the apartment where the party were assembled.

The door was ajar, and Mrs. Dimple and Mr. Parke were seated in a position to see and hear what transpired.

Susan had stationed herself in the room near the entrance communicating with the narrow passage in the rear through which Tim was to pass; the moment he entered she sprang before him, barring his further progress, and commenced weeping, with the corner of her apron lifted to her eyes.

"Go 'way, Betty," said Tim. "What're you popping before me, for! What're you crying about?"

"Because you've treated me so cruelly, so shamefully."

"Me! 'Taint so; I didn't. I havn't done anything to make you cry!"

"When I was so glad to see you come back, and laughed, and jumped, you looked grum, and turned your back on me. I want to know what you done it for?" She dropped the corner of her apron as she spoke, and grasped the button of his coat.

"I'll tell you, if you must know. It was your tongue that night which sent me off after a book that never was nowhere, and that let the cat out of the bag to Mr. Mallex, who went and carried away poor Ned. That's what you did!"

"I didn't——"

"You did!"

"I mean I didn't intend to do it. You know I didn't. I wouldn't have done such a thing for all the world, if I'd known it!"

"May be not. But when a bad thing's done, what difference does it make, whether one knew what she was doing or not? I wouldn't have a blab-tongue for my wife, for all the world! She'd be having my head cracked every day. Let go my button!"

"I won't! I'm no blab-tongue. I'll cut it off, first! You know I didn't intend to say anything to do anybody any harm."

"Let go my button! What's the odds whether you intended it or not? It's the same thing——"

"No, Tim, it is not the same thing as if she had done it intentionally!" said Mrs. Dimple, stepping in, followed by Mr. Parke.

"By no means the same thing," said the lawyer. "There can be no great offence, where there is no intention to do wrong."

"You must forgive her, Tim," said Mrs. Dimple; "or rather as there is nothing to be forgiven, you must be reconciled."

In the midst of this scene, a servant announced that Mr. Eugene Bainton was in the parlour, and desired to see Mrs. Dimple! This announcement produced an instantaneous silence and caused several faces to turn pale.

"Ma, are you not engaged?" asked Alice.

"I will see him, Alice," replied the mother.

"I pray you," said Mr. Parke, "to look and act, if possible, as you would have done, had you been kept in ignorance of everything relating to the history of Ned."

"I will endeavor to do so. I see the necessity of it, and think I shall be equal to the part I am to enact. Remain, all of you, until I return."

Mrs. Dimple first withdrew to her private chamber, and then descended to the parlor most tastefully attired, and seeming altogether more charming and lovely, as Bainton thought, and almost ventured to say, than he had ever beheld her. Eugene, himself, was carefully dressed for the occasion. He was handsome, too, in the estimation of the

ladies. Not more than thirty, of a medium stature, with a fair complexion, light hair, blue eyes, and a small foot. His hands, however, which had not been exempt from service in his days of poverty, were large and rough. But these were covered with faultless kid gloves, while his feet were ever thrust forward and artfully exhibited. He did not seem to survey them himself; but he observed others looking at them. Like many men grown suddenly rich, he had fallen into the habit of presuming that his wealth gave him an influence, and entitled him to privileges not to be enjoyed by others in different circumstances. Thus he was supercilious with persons of moderate possessions, and affected a bold equality and fellowship with the wealthy.

There was a flush upon the cheek of the lady, and a slight smile, produced by mingled emotions of indignation and curiosity. And the pointed look, somewhat unusual in the brief salutation, observed by Bainton, was interpreted by him as a favorable augury. His announcement alone, had perhaps prepared the radiant widow to expect a tender declaration. At the first aspect he imagined he already experienced the premonitions of success, and his lip assumed a curl of triumph, and his language a tone of boldness.

"Madam," said he, "a sudden impulse directed my steps to your dwelling; but not a new purpose."

"Indeed! Then I am indebted to chance for the pleasure of this visit. But it was your settled purpose to call again some time or other?"

"Pleasant and spirited! It was thus I hoped to find you. Fortune has hitherto directed my steps to the accomplishment of my wishes—to all of them but one——"

"Really, Mr. Bainton, you have been a fortunate man. Never to have but one wish ungratified, is indeed the lot of but few. For my part, I must own," she continued with a sigh, "such has not been my good fortune."

"It may be in future, madam."

"I do not expect it, and hence I shall not be disappointed."

"The one wish, however, to which I have alluded, may still, I hope, be gratified."

"If it be within the range of possibility, and within the

limits of justice and honor, of course one may hope for its accomplishment. What is it? if it be not forbidden to my idle curiosity."

"On the contrary, its accomplishment must depend entirely upon your concurrence."

"Upon *my* concurrence! Then, truly, it is not to be kept a secret from me."

"By no means. But I want language to express myself. Can you not infer what it is? May I not presume upon your favor so much as to urge you to afford me a slight intimation by a pause—a meaning silence—that you will contribute whatever may be in your power—and in this delicate matter, you are all powerful—to secure the consummation of my wish, which is certainly both justifiable and honorable."

"A mystery! You would have me fully express myself without uttering a word!"

"You have said one might surely hope, if the object were just——"

"Yes; speaking of indifferent matters. For instance, if you desired to possess any particular estate, it might be obtained, if in the market, and a sufficient price——"

"In the market—price! Geraldine! I meant not that!"

"Geraldine! I believe you never uttered that before?"

"No! But I would do it daily, hourly, for the remainder of my life! The wish I have, yet ungratified, is the possession of your hand!"

"Geraldine! Let me never hear it again. Let it be the first and the last time. That wish can never be gratified——"

"Consider!" exclaimed Eugene, endeavoring to clasp her hand.

"Have I not done so?" said she, eluding him, and rising with dignity. "Have I not decided? You have heard of the laws of the Medes and Persians; they were not more irrevocable than my decision!"

Pale, and trembling in every limb, Eugene stood like a victim under the gallows. It was a shock such as he had never anticipated, much less experienced before. So completely was he astounded, that he seemed bereft of reason

and utterance for several moments, and stood gazing down at his feet—but not admiring them. At length, lifting his head, he said :

“I suppose, then, my fate is sealed ?”

“If I am to be the judge, yes—so far as the fate you make reference to is concerned. But one’s fate is a somewhat more comprehensive thing than merely one’s wedding ; and there is a more awful judge than the being who declines to bestow her hand. It is at His judgment seat that the decrees of fate are registered.”

“Madam, has any one slandered me ?”

“Not that I am aware of.”

“Is some other one—one whom I know—preferred to me ?”

“Now you transcend the limits of your privilege. You have no right to interrogate me, and I will not answer you.”

“I ask it not as a right. I beg it as a favor. Has Job Mallex——”

“Enough, sir. You have my answer. Henceforth my lips are sealed. The Pythoness has spoken,” she said, with a derisive smile.

“I humbly take my leave, madam,” said he, departing slowly, “But yet,” he continued, half turning, I hope I may continue to enjoy your friendship ?”

“I know not what to answer. Of course the proposition you have made should not make me your enemy. You must consult your own sense of propriety—but remember my decision can never be reconsidered, and that it would be worse than folly for the proposal to be renewed.”

“Farewell, madam !”

She bowed as he withdrew. She then hastened to join her little mixed coterie, with cheeks a little pale, but with an expression of fixed resolve upon her firm lip.

“It is over. He is gone,” said she in answer to the inquiring look of Mr. Parke. She then informed him in a whisper what had been the nature and result of the interview. This was hardly done, before the servant announced another visitor—Mr. Job Mallex !

“Oh, ma, *do* be engaged this time !” said Alice. “We are so happy. Do, pray, stay with us !”

"No, Alice. I will soon return, and then I will be done with them. There will be no others to dispose of," she added, glancing at Mr. Parke.

"Upon my life, madam," said the lawyer, recovering from a slight paroxysm of his asthma, "I am decidedly of the opinion that you have done enough in disposing of one visitor; and I must add my entreaties to those of your daughter, that you will deny this suitor——"

Mrs. Dimple nodded her head in acquiescence—and Mr. Parke comprehended her true meaning.

"I mean that you will deny him an audience," said he, "I am apprehensive that your nerves will not suffice to carry you through two——"

"Never fear!" said she, with her proud lip curled in immovable determination. "I have no agitation, no misgivings; and feel altogether equal to the undertaking. But I will not detain him so long as I did his partner." And she prepared to obey the summons immediately.

Mallex, unlike Bainton, had not entered the mansion with the premeditated purpose of tendering his hand and fortune to the widow. Upon leaving his own house he had merely intended to pass the evening with Eugene. But upon finding his partner and rival had gone out to spend the evening, and not doubting, upon learning from a servant the particular care he had bestowed upon his dress, that he had sought the society of the widow, he resolved to follow him thither. Although neither of the partners in iniquity, as well as in business, had hitherto expressed an intention to seek the hand of Mrs. Dimple, but on the contrary had sought to conceal any such purpose, yet each began to entertain a suspicion that the other had designs of that nature, and they were mutually watchful. It was therefore the especial purpose of Mallex to prevent, by the embarrassment of his presence, his rival from obtaining any advantage over him. But when he found himself alone in the parlor, and ascertained from the servant that his mistress was at home, and would doubtless grant him the pleasure of an interview, the thought flashed upon him that there could never be a better opportunity than the present for him to take advantage of the absence of his rival. In military phrase, he resolved to steal a march upon his friend.

Again Mrs. Dimple entered with a smile, which the deluded suitor too eagerly seized upon as an encouraging omen. He was as usual ardent in his salutations. He spoke fluently and boldly on all occasions; and very greatly admiring the sound of his own voice, and supposing it was equally admired by others, there was generally an incessant flow of words from his mouth.

"Ah, madam!" cried he, "I am disappointed and delighted!"

"Indeed! I pity and congratulate you."

"But let me explain——"

"Oh, no explanation is necessary."

Mallex might now add surprise or astonishment to his emotions. It was not usually easy for any one to interpose a word until his first speech was fully delivered. But the ladies, and Mrs. Dimple particularly, had generally waited in patient silence for him to indicate a desire to be responded to, by a decided closure of his wordy flood-gate.

"Certainly an explanation is necessary, else I have uttered an absurdity."

"Ha, ha, ha! And is it possible you conceive yourself to be incapable of that?"

"I beg your pardon, madam; but I would not do so deliberately in the presence of the lady whom——"

"In the presence of a lady! Why, I supposed such things were uttered more frequently in their presence than elsewhere. But, proceed, I pray you; I will not interrupt you again."

"It was merely that I was disappointed in not finding Mr. Bainton here; and delighted—hem! in meeting with you alone." This was not uttered so glibly as it would have been, had he not met with an interruption. His confident volubility had evidently suffered a check. Nor did the silence and gravity which followed heighten his hopes.

"Go on, sir: I have said I would not interrupt you again."

"But the manner in which it is repeated, has interrupted me most confoundedly. I almost forget what else I intended to say!"

"Pause a moment. Perhaps you can recollect it."

"Then without further preamble or circumlocution," said he, touching the floor with one knee, "I love you, madam, and ask your hand in marriage!"

This was so abrupt; the manner of it so unexpected; the point so precise, and the impudence so complete, that the lady was under the necessity of inserting her handkerchief in her mouth, and averting her head, to avoid a hearty fit of laughter. It would have been impossible to behold his face and attitude without giving vent to such an impulse. But her resolution prevailed.

"Enough, sir, rise." He sprang up. "But do not misunderstand me! You have not succeeded—you never will succeed."

"That is plain enough not to be misunderstood. But, really, madam, what I propose is seriously, earnestly done."

"And what I say is very soberly considered."

"Inexorable, then?"

"If you can find more decisive words than I have spoken, to signify my settled and irrevocable purpose to decline any such honor, I beseech you to be my prompter, or rather consider them spoken, and apply them to your case."

"Upon my soul, I cannot do it! Words seem hateful to me now! I shall, in my contempt for them, grow taciturn hereafter. I never was more disappointed in my life! Madam, if my affair with your coachman is the cause of this let me refer you to Mr. Persever for an explanation. If you have supposed me culpable in the harmless project to remove the little bastard boy to save my friend Bainton from the annoyance of a counterfeit nephew, claiming a share of his fortune, you have only to mention that matter to my friend Mr. D. L. Parke, who will exculpate me——"

"Cease, sir. It is unnecessary. The answer I have given you is final."

"Then, finally, madam, I have the honor to bid you adieu."

And the off-hand suitor bowed, and departed—without exhibiting any evidences that his heart had been deeply concerned in his matrimonial project.

CHAPTER XII.

NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED—ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH A
HUMBUG.

WHEN Mr. Eugene Bainton withdrew from the presence of the uncomplying widow, he retraced his steps with a rapidity which seemed to increase in proportion with the accumulation of indignant thoughts boiling and bubbling up in his confused head. He never paused until he reached his house and stood surveying himself in a large mirror. What feature, what point, was there in which one could discover the slightest defect? The widow was about his own age, no richer than himself, and had a daughter to inherit her fortune—perhaps to be her rival in the gay world. What could have induced her to reject his offer? Did she prefer Mallex? or did she credit the stories of old Mr. Parke and Susan Meek? Had she listened to any tales respecting his business transactions? He was conscious that he had been guilty of monstrous offences, and was such a suitor as no virtuous lady would knowingly accept for her husband; but how was it possible for any lady to know anything in relation to his guilt? It was a mystery he could not solve; and he threw himself down on a sofa, a prey to feelings of mingled mortification, dread and resentment.

It was in this condition that Mallex found him, himself a prey to similar feelings, and having followed close upon the footsteps of his partner in his retreat from the same field of discomfiture.

"I have found you at last, Eugene," said Mallex; "I was here an hour ago, when you were away. What's the matter? You seem dejected."

"Do I! And you seem to be excited! You did not await me with the patience of Job?" This was said by Eugene with a faint smile.

"No; I went in quest of you."

"So! Then you called, perhaps, at——"

"I did. But——"

"You found no——"

"Satisfaction. None, whatever!"

"Is that true, Mallex!"

"Without a particle of equivocation!"

"Certainly you did not tarry long?"

"Quite long enough, I assure you, for all useful purposes."

"What do you mean?" asked Eugene, sitting upright on the sofa, and regarding his visitor with interest.

"Just what I say. Let us be candid. We have too long concealed our intentions respecting this speculation—I mean the widow—from each other. To-night I proposed, and——"

"What? what?" cried Eugene, in great excitement.

"Was flatly refused! Peremptorily rejected! Hence I say there can be no useful purpose subserved by a repetition of my visits in that quarter."

"Aha! But then, we must have no more concealments, you say? Very well. When the widow received you, she had just given me my congé."

"I supposed so; but she would acknowledge nothing. I would congratulate you, were your countenance less doleful. Why are you sad? Is it pity for me?"

"No, by Jupiter!"

"She did not protest you, too?"

"Do I look as if I had been honored? I do not feel so!"

"Ah! Who's to pay the damages?"

"True, Job, the damages—or in other phrase, the penalty! We have both been protested, and are bankrupts on love's 'change. Something is known or suspected in relation to our transactions; else why this result?"

"It is remarkable. With our fortunes——"

"And our persons," added Eugene, admiring his foot.

"It is most extraordinary. But, perhaps, it is as well. We both could not have her fortune; and the success of either might have produced an explosion and blown us all to destruction."

Eugene always turned pale at such intimations. He had been the dupe of Mallex from the beginning. It was

owing to his counsels that he had been led astray in the first instance; and on several occasions, subsequently, he had been deterred from yielding to impulses of justice and inclinations to repair the injuries he had wrought, by the intimidating pictures of disgrace, ruin and punishment, held up by his accomplice.

Have we not enough? Had we not better divide our assets, and——”

“Go to the penitentiary separately?”

“The penitentiary! Do not mention that word again, I beseech you! What have we done to merit such an awful punishment? If a breach of trust could be established, still, being a partner, no such penalty would be incurred. If my nephew really died, I could have had no agency in it. He was not placed in the institution through any instrumentality of mine. If he lives, his claims would only involve a civil controversy.

“These are weak and foolish qualms, Bainton. If we have done nothing wrong, why be alarmed? But I say there is danger, and I know what I say. While we are united, we are safe. We can confer with each other only, and keep our own counsels. But if you were to attempt an explanation to others, and propose, or act without a proposition, upon a plan of reparation and restitution, every transaction would be investigated, and they might afford your enemies and mine ample grounds to go upon. Fraud would be alleged, and proved, and our destruction would be complete. You were—and I too—precipitate in the recent transaction with old Parke, and that infernal lawyer Persever——”

“Do you think so? Why, I thought it was an admirable arrangement. Nothing has afforded me more satisfaction——”

“Nonsense! Let your heart be turned to steel, or it will soon be pierced through by your enemies. What do you think Parke did with that money?”

“How should I know?”

“How should *I* know?”

“Do you?”

“I do. I was soon convinced we had committed a silly act—that we furnished the enemy with the means of

assault—and then I watched them, or had them watched. A portion of the money will no doubt be expended on Susan Meek and her protege——”

“Well! I have no objection.

“But I have. Death, or impenetrable obscurity, can alone secure us against molestation from that quarter; and if you suppose that money, obtained as that was, and so expended, will have the effect of sealing their lips, you will soon find yourself most bitterly disappointed. Have we not had a specimen already? What else, think you, caused our rejection——”

“True! Job, you are right! But how has the money been expended? Persever has not determined to bring suit?”

“He has left the city. He started the day after Parke received the money.”

“Whither did he go? Is he to return?”

“He has gone to the west to trace your footsteps——”

“Hah!——”

“Yes, sir! And, as I learn his family do not expect him to return for many months, it is probable that he will traverse the plains, and collect evidence of every transaction.”

“Job, we are ruined!”

“No, sir; be guided by me, and all will be well.”

“I will! But had we not better sell——”

“No! Neither real estate, stocks, nor any species of property must be transferred. It would occasion suspicion, and might be prevented, as Radley says, by an injunction.”

“Radley! I don’t like that smooth-faced and oily-tongued lawyer. Don’t let him into our secrets, Job.”

“No further than necessity requires. But I have a scheme to disappoint this skulking young champion of the old lawyer.”

“What is it, Job?”

“No matter; it is not perfected yet. You shall share the benefit of it. We must, in the meantime, put on bold faces. The effects of the widow’s conduct must not be visible in our aspects. I have a rod in pickle for her, too.”

“I’m glad of it. I never saw such cool conduct in my life. She left me no margin for another bid.”

"Ha—ha—ha—ha! It was the same with me. She must have been rehearsing it! No matter; we'll corner her, yet. We have only to be prudent, and keep our own counsel. No confidants, no confederates. We may some day get her banker in our clutches."

"Beware of Radley, then!"

"He has more reason to beware of me. I could cage him, if I saw proper. I will use him, and when I am done with him, I shall, if necessary, cast him to the dogs! If we can maintain our ground here; that is, if no new evidence springs up, in regard to the identity of your nephew, we shall come off conquerors."

The door bell was heard, and a servant traversed the hall. After a pause, the voice of the menial was heard, even in the parlour, telling some one to "go off." The front door was then closed; but before the servant had retraced his steps to the kitchen, the bell was rung again, and with more violence than ever. Again the door was opened, and the servant once more ordered the pertinacious individual to depart. Eugene, stepping to the parlour door, heard his name uttered, and by a female. He told his man to admit her. She came into the parlour, and, not waiting for an invitation, sat down on the first chair that presented itself. She was an aged woman, with iron-gray hair. Her complexion was dark; her features large and coarse, with tufts of grizzly hair on her chin and upper lip. There was an habitual and incessant shaking of her head, like the quivering of a needle on a pivot; and yet she smiled constantly, but not sweetly.

"Who do you wish to see?" asked Bainton.

"You—Mr. Bainton; and the other gentleman, too, though I didn't expect to find him here. I know him," and her head shook more violently, and her smile became more horrible as she spoke.

"Who are you?" demanded Eugene.

"I'm Mrs. Sutly. La, can't you think?"

"No! What do you want?"

"You can't think who I am? shut that door and I'll tell you."

Bainton directed the servant who stood in the hall to go about his business, and then closed the door.

"I remember you," said Mallex, rather fiercely; "you are one of the matrons at the house of refuge."

"True," said Eugene; "I now recollect her distinctly. I thought I had seen her somewhere." And it would have been difficult to entirely forget the forbidding quiver of her head, her harsh dark features, and her sardonic smile.

"What do you want, old woman?" asked Bainton, betraying in his manner the disgust he felt.

"Can't you guess? You needn't frown so, and turn up your nose at me. I know you would rather see me here than a certain fair-skinned boy I could name."

A silence ensued for several moments, during which both the men turned pale. And the old woman scrutinized their faces, her horrible head shaking involuntarily all the time.

"My nephew is dead?" said Eugene.

"And buried," said Job.

"You both think so—no doubt you do. I won't dispute it—no doubt you think so."

"Don't you believe it? Don't you know it?" demanded Bainton.

"Well, I can't say I do, to *you*. I told other folks he was dead; but may be I was mistaken."

"Old woman," said Mallex, "I think I know your object. You wish to frighten us, and to extort money——"

"I don't, sir—it's no such thing!" said she, quickly and harshly, and approaching her face so near to his, that he impulsively drew back.

"Very well; but if such had been your purpose, you would have been defeated. We have the physician's certificate of his death, which is official testimony."

"Oh, yes! 'Twas Dr. Drastic. He asked *me* the name of the dead boy, and I told him Edward Lorn Parke. Ha—ha—ha! He put it down, just as I told him, and signed his name to it. But now he's fallen out with me, and got me removed. He says my old shaking head scares the boys, and hinders 'em from getting well!"

"Was not the dead boy's name correctly given?" asked Eugene, with a quivering voice.

"No. And I'm glad it wasn't. A young woman stole the boy away, and I was afraid I would suffer for it.

They were dying there several every day. So I said he was dead, the next time his name was called—and the doctor was my witness."

Eugene seemed to be paralyzed. He was, for an instant, incapable of speech or motion. But not so Mallex. He arose quickly, and closed the inside shutters of the window.

"Don't do that," said the old hag, with her satanic smile; "my son Dick, who came with me, is waiting out there in the street, and he might think something was happening."

Mallex threw them open again violently, and resumed his seat.

"What do you propose?" asked Eugene, when sufficiently recovered from his shock.

"When you dug up the boy—the other boy—not your nephew, I said you ought to allow me a hundred dollars a year——"

"I will——"

"No you wont! That wont do, now. I've found out that a great fortin belongs to the boy, which you two have got the use of as long as he's kept back."

"How did you learn that?" demanded Job, very fiercely.

"I larnt it from my darter."

"Your what?"

"My darter, who is chambermaid and cook for Mrs. Persever."

Again the flush which had been reinstated fled from the cheeks of the men. Dangers seemed to multiply around them. They consulted together briefly. Mallex decided, while Bainton acquiesced.

"How much money do you require for your services?"

"What services?" asked the hag, with a deeper smile and a more rapid vibration of her head.

"The aid you are to give us hereafter. We want your friendship and assistance."

"Now you talk like a gentleman of sense! I must have two hundred and fifty dollars a year. That will keep me comfortable, and won't be extortioning too much."

"Remember that the boy who died and was buried, is now but a skeleton. There can be nothing left but the bones. No one can identify them. If brought into court,

we have Dr. Drastic's certificate that they are the bones of young Parke; and who can deny it?"

"I could deny it; but I won't, if you pay what I ask."

"And what would your denial avail?"

"I could prove it! But I won't tell you how. Oh, I've seen people dug up after being dead twenty years. They don't crumble so fast under ground as you think."

"You could do nothing—and we fear nothing from that source. But you might be of service to us hereafter. If you will consent to this, you shall have what you demand."

"Could you pay me some of the money down? My Dick wants some cash dreadful bad, to help him to get married. And poor folks are dead sure to have a house full."

"You shall have one-half the sum now," said Mallex, looking over some bills in his pocket-book.

"Then I'll serve you! And you'll find me worth the money. Give it to me."

"The old lawyer lodges at Persever's?" asked Mallex, still retaining the money.

"He does so. It was him my darter heard telling all about this grand business. He sleeps in the back building right over the kitchen, and we sleep in the story above, right over his room; and it makes no odds whether we're in the kitchen below, or in the chamber above, his everlasting cough keeps us awake half of every night. I wish he was taken away, dead or alive! Why don't you give me the money? are you going to repent?"

"Not I!" exclaimed Mallex fiercely, his brow contracted, and his eye glowing with a savage expression. "Here is the money. But I want a longer talk with you. Can you go with me to my house?"

"If Dick goes, too, and waits for me in the street."

"It is number —, in — Row. Go. I will meet you there!"

"What do you want with her, Job?" asked Eugene, when Mrs. Sutly had departed.

"No matter, Bainton. Let it suffice that whatever it may be, the object is as interesting to you as to myself. You have that guarantee. I can do nothing in this business which will not be *mutually* beneficial."

"Enough. Only let it be understood between us that no capital crime is to be added to what has already been done. I would rather——"

"Nonsense, man! What great crime do you suppose me capable of committing? We have a brace of lawyers on our track. One has a wise head, and the other a bold heart. Must we not endeavour to counteract them? We must work. We must learn to be expert in their arts. If they mine, we must countermine, or they will blow us up."

"That is justifiable. Go on, then. I leave it all to you. I acknowledge my incapacity to contend against them. I often wonder in amazement at what I have already done."

"There was nothing original in your conduct."

"True; I followed your instructions."

Mallex withdrew and hastened to his lodgings. He met Mrs. Sutly at the steps. They entered the parlour. It was dimly illuminated. The jet of gas, not larger than a pea, did not afford light enough to betray the change which had taken place in the countenance of Mallex. Both the man and the woman were pale with the thoughts that possessed them. They sat for some moments in silence; while the outline of the form of Dick was plainly observable in the street.

"You say," remarked Mallex, in a low, unnatural voice, "that the old man sleeps in a back room?"

"No, I didn't!"

"You did not? I thought you did. Here is another note—a fifty dollar bill." He placed it in her hand, and she clutched it.

"I didn't say he slept—but he lays there, or rather walks. He don't sleep scarcely any at all; it's walking and coughing all the time. And, blast him! he won't let any body else sleep?"

"Would you quiet him if you could do it without trouble?"

"I understand. Yes, I would! If anything could be made by it, and it could be done as you say without trouble—without being disturbed for it afterwards."

"You can easily make five hundred dollars by it."

"Tell me how. Don't be afraid. I've done such sar-

vice before. I've quieted noisy children in my time, jest for the sake of peace."

"What do you kindle your fires with?"

"Charcoal."

"Of course you have skillets and ovens in the kitchen?"

"In course, and long-handled stewing-pans."

"Does the old man lock his door?"

"Never! He don't close it. He says he can't get his breath in a closed room. My darter goes up to bed an hour before I do. When I go up I always pass by his door."

"Good! Admirable! But does he *never* sleep?"

"Yes, a little. I always can tell when he falls to sleep. It's when he stops coughing. Then I goes up; and if I can get to sleep before he wakes, I can have my little rest. But it's precious little sleep I has myself, and I do with as little as possible on account of the dreaming."

"Everything conspires so accomplish our plan! The five hundred dollars will be yours, and the old man's cough will be cured."

"The old man's no baby. He might be too much for me; and it will not do to have anybody else in the secret."

"No. But you forget the pan of coals. When he's asleep, if they be gently placed under his bed—the chimney stopped up with a pillow—and the door closed, he will never annoy any one again."

"Do you think so? are you sure of it? I've never seen it done that way."

"It's all you will have to do. Only when the pan has been there about an hour, or perhaps it had better be two, you must go in softly, and remove the pillow. Then go to bed. Your work will be finished. Do not let Mr. Eugene Bainton know anything about our agreement. Come to me—say a month afterward—and I will pay you the money."

"Will it be five hundred besides the fifty?"

"Yes!"

"When must I do this service?"

"Ay, when shall it be done? Let me see. Not immediately, for several reasons. You will find out from some one of the family when Persever is to return. It must be before he returns. He may not be back for many months. The longer it is put off, the safer you will be from suspicion.

But if anything occurs to bring Persever back sooner than the time fixed upon when he departed, you must act promptly, and at all hazards. Be in readiness to do for the old man at a moment's warning."

The old woman made no reply. She arose and departed without any word of leave-taking. Mallex strode towards the chandelier, but paused abruptly. He did not want more light. He then groped his way through the darkness to his chamber. He could not sleep. * * * *

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSAN'S WEDDING—NED'S FIRST GLIMPSES OF THE WORLD— SUMMERTON.

It was beautiful balmy May. Summerton was clothed in its vernal green. Mr. Mulvany had leased an humble dwelling in a half rural part of the town, and was making preparations for his removal thither. In front were ornamental trees; in the rear fruit trees, and an ample garden. In view was the broad peaceful river. This was his Eden, and thither he was soon to bring his Eve. But was any subtle serpent to be an intruder there? He thought not. He did not fear it.

And Susan's heart fluttered with happy anticipations. She indulged no apprehension that other scenes, and different circumstances, and new favorites, might diminish her affection for Ned Lorn. On the contrary, when urged by her scholar-lover, who as usual had no correct ideas of practical economy, to expend certain sums in the purchase of articles which might be dispensed with, she still repeated her old motto, with a slight variation, "*we can't afford it; remember Ned.*"

But poor Ned himself had been rendered very unhappy, in the midst, too, of his joyous anticipations at the near approach of the nuptials of Susan, and his removal from the city. The blow came from the hands of Tom Denny

—the innocent hands of unconscious Tom. Mallex, his evil genius, had concluded to prepare a written version of Susan's conduct and Ned's spurious pretensions, with many embellishments designed to shield the guilty and cover the innocent with odium. The story was inserted in the newspapers, and was read by the amazed and spirit wounded boy. He could never revert to the cruel publication without being the victim of a painful dejection.

Ned had the presence of mind not to mention what he had seen to Susan; but he placed the paper in the hands of Mr. Mulvany, who regarded the statement as a mere bagatelle. He said that if the story were true, it would be a serious and sinful matter for the guilty ones; but being false, as he and Ned both knew it to be, why should they pay any regard to it? He advised Ned to destroy the paper and say nothing about it, and not to think of it himself. Alas! this was impossible. Ned had already read too many books, and mingled with too many people, to be insensible to the effects of such a calumny. He had not been endowed with the Christian fortitude, the philosophic nonchalance, that Mr. Mulvany could boast. Nature, which had made him good and truthful, had likewise made him sensitive. He thought he had not been so warmly welcomed as usual, nor so reluctantly parted with, at Mrs. Dimple's mansion. No language had been used or omitted from which to draw such an inference; nor could he describe any action which was designed to express a diminution of favor: but he *felt* it was so, and he believed it. It might not have been that any one at the mansion was capable of believing the statements in the vile publication; but the notoriety of the fact that he was the object of the writer's ridicule and condemnation, was sufficient to make him suppose that his presence could not be so desirable as formerly.

There were a few of the inhabitants of the alley who exhibited symptoms of a disposition to be rudely malignant on the occasion. Several of the boys with whom, for their notorious bad characters, Susan would never permit Ned to associate, had now their revenge. They never suffered him to pass, or passed themselves within his hearing, without taunting him as a pretender, and as one

claiming to be the son of respectable parents. Ned with difficulty restrained himself from resenting such insults in a summary manner. He had the inclination to do it; but was withheld by his respect for Mr. Mulvany, who charged him to pay no attention to such annoyances. He was soon to leave them. But what if the story should spread even to Summerton? Thus was Ned's anticipated happiness to be mingled with painful anxieties.

Mr. D. L. Parke cheered him as well as he could, promising that when Mr. Persever returned, they would together concoct a counter-statement and have it published.

Mallex had skilfully, as he supposed, thrown into his production several compliments to the aged lawyer, and laboured to create an impression that he was altogether incredulous respecting the wonderful tale of the rescue and preservation of the son and heir of John Parke, his brother.

For several weeks preceding the day appointed for the celebration of the nuptials, Susan had been busily engaged in the necessary preparations for so interesting an event. Piece by piece, articles of her old furniture, and of her cherished household goods, were sent off to the river, and thence transported to Summerton. Nothing was to be left behind; nothing to be sold; for that would involve a sacrifice, and she "couldn't afford it."

She and Ned had likewise become attached to many of the old articles they had been so long accustomed to see about the house; and although they might be worthless in themselves, they determined not to part with them, for old acquaintance sake. Thus by degrees the removal of her little property was effected without attracting observation, and when the day arrived for her final abandonment of the dwelling, she had only to deliver the key to her landlord.

They were married in church. Mr. Parke, Ned Lorn, Mrs. Dimple, Alice and Tim, were the witnesses. Separating at the door after the ceremony, the parties retired in different directions. Mulvany, his bride, and Ned, entered a hackney coach and were driven down to the river.

Ned was pale and silent—but he could not be long cast down in Susan's presence. She exerted all her powers to dissipate his mysterious dejection, and succeeded. But

she was not aware of the extent of the consummation her influence had accomplished. In her estimation Ned was still the mere child, his desires bounded by considerations of mere personal security. She had no conception of the change which had taken place in the mind of the intelligent boy. He was not only fond of reading, but had become observant of the nature and tendency of the facts revealed in his books. He had obtained an insight—yet limited, but inviting to farther investigations—into the worldly principles and motives of his species. The curtain of life was rising slowly before his eyes. A portion of the great picture had already been revealed. Endued by nature with all the ardent longings of hopeful youth—the desire of winning distinction, or of meriting applause by the excellence of his conduct—he had already discovered what he supposed, or feared, might be an inseparable bar to the attainment of the objects of his youthful ambition. He felt, at least, that however successful might be his exertions on the vast field he was about to enter, the ineffaceable stigma which the world would be likely to brand upon his forehead, however innocent he might be, would prove effectual in the destruction of his hopes of happiness.

No matter. The scales of justice, like the surface of mighty waters, evenly poised, though long in agitation, finally assume a proper level and an exact equilibrium. Wafted in ease upon the soft billows of time, one scans not the inequalities of the world; beholds none of its sublimities; appreciates none of its ineffable enjoyments; and cannot comprehend its crimes, to which he may be made at any moment, the irremediable victim. Hence the piercing goad which rouses a brave heart from its slothful repose, should not always be deemed a direful infliction. An innocent man under the chastisement of injustice, having the spirit to hold his brow erect, will find it encircled by a celestial halo from the hand of God. No enemy shall vanquish him; no difficulty deter him; no obstacle arrest him. He who created him will vindicate his cause, and furnish the means of final success; and his achievements will be more substantial, the fruits of his labors infinitely

more valuable, than if he had suffered no wrongs and encountered no obstacles.

It was in this school that Ned Lorn had received the first lesson. The baleful shadows mingling with the sunlight of his young existence, if they threw upon his brow a "pale cast of thought," did not subdue him. His energies, so far from being repressed, were eagerly quivering for an opportunity to assert their capacity. He had done nothing to deserve the frowns and condemnation of the world; but he might accomplish something to merit its admiration. This was his hope; this his object; this his determination. What else was there to live for? No father, no mother, no relative; none whom he might claim as his kindred. What was there for him to do but to repay the kindness of Susan, and of his limited circle of friends? And how might this be done but by the exertion of his energies of body and mind? He resolved to make every effort in his power. Oh, thought he, how sweet will be the tasks which others deprecate! How impatient was he to begin!

There were fitful glimpses, besides, of another bright thought in the ambitious heart of Ned. Might he not win the approbation and secure the lasting esteem of Alice? He was too young to be in love. The tender passion celebrated by poets had not yet throbbled within his bosom. It was affection of another kind. She had been the only child of her sex with whom he had associated. Hers was not an earthly, but a celestial image, which mingled in his dreams. He had scarcely ever beheld her face without being greeted by a smile; and he could understand by the expression of her eyes that the innocent affection he felt was reciprocated. That it might continue so through life, was another stimulation to laudable exertion.

CHAPTER XIV.

NED'S GOOD CONDUCT AT SCHOOL—IS VISITED BY HIS UNCLE—MEETS WITH ALICE—FINE PROSPECTS.

THEY were delighted with their new home. Susan inspected with satisfaction every apartment, from the kitchen to the garret. Mr. Mulvany's attention was confined principally to his little library. Ned most admired the garden, which extended back more than two hundred feet, and was some twenty in width. What a contrast between it and the cramped area of six feet by eleven in the rear of the house in Pecan Alley. There were cherry trees in blossom; rows of gooseberries and currants; walks, borders, and a flower bed! It was in comparison a paradise to anything he had hitherto beheld.

"Susan!" cried he, espying her looking at him from a window above, "here is where I shall desire to take my exercise. I will raise a sufficient quantity of vegetables to supply our table. I would much rather be working in this lovely garden, than burrowing in the river bank with the boys we saw engaged in that employment as the boat passed along."

"But you must play for the sake of recreation," said Susan; "the rector deems it necessary, and he knows best."

"Oh, I will do whatever he desires; but I assure you that I would not wish a better amusement than working in this nice garden, after labouring at my books."

Mrs. Mulvany was about to reply, when she was summoned down stairs by the maid. A moment after Ned's presence was desired in the parlor.

Ned found Mr. and Mrs. Mulvany seated on either side of an elderly gentleman, who seemed to address them frankly, and in tones of great kindness. There was a benevolent smile upon his lip, but something resembling an expression of sadness in his penetrating eye.

"This is Ned, is it not?" he asked, being the first to notice the boy's entrance.

"Yes, sir," said Susan. "Ned, this is the president."

"Come hither, my son! Mr. Mulvany has told me how intelligent you are, and that you have always been fond of your books." The president held him affectionately by his hand while he spoke.

"Mr. Mulvany has been very kind to me, sir: and I wished to please him by being as perfect as possible in my lessons."

"That was very right and proper. We shall endeavor to have you kindly treated here, and no doubt your progress will be profitable to yourself and creditable to the institution. I have a letter from your uncle, Mr. Parke——"

"Pardon, sir; but did he say he was my uncle?"

"He did. And he said he felt a deep interest in your welfare, and intended to protect and cherish you. But if he had not been your uncle, what then? I had learned your history from Mr. Mulvany, and your reception here would have been precisely the same. You should not dwell on that painful subject. Leave its solution to your heavenly father. Why do you weep? I shall, as far as circumstances permit, be your earthly father. I shall love you, I think."

Susan withdrew to conceal her emotion, and even Mr. Mulvany took up a book and averted his face.

"I thank you, sir. I will do all I can to please you. I am glad that I have some kind friends, since I am without parents. And it seems that for every enemy that frowns upon me—and God knows I have never injured anybody—there is a new friend comes to encourage me."

"It is ever so, my son. It is your heavenly father who protects you. Rely upon him. The disgrace the world would heap upon you, will be dispelled; the wrongs you suffer will be recompensed."

"Oh, sir! have you seen that terrible letter about Susan and myself which was in the newspapers?"

"I have. Let it not trouble you. I have read every word of it, and am more warmly your friend than if it had never been written. But I had heard Mr. Mulvany's version first, and am satisfied there is no truth in the newspaper statement."

"But, alas, sir! Everybody cannot hear Mr. Mulvany's version."

"True! And many a good man will believe the other."

Thus a slander becomes the most cruel weapon of malignant vengeance. Good men believe it, and repeat their belief to other good men. Opinions are thus formed, never, perhaps, to be eradicated. It is an easy thing to sprinkle the darkest stains upon the surface of the fairest objects; and the contrast of hue makes them the more prominent and observable: but how hard a labor it is to remove them! There is but one remedy, my son, for such distressing evils. A good conscience and a perfect reliance upon the protection and assistance of God."

"I will strive to do and feel as you advise."

"It is well. I am capable of giving you good counsel, for I have beheld the flood of bitterness poured out by very many enemies—enemies more pertinacious and dangerous than yours. I forgive them, as I hope to be forgiven."

"And I do not hate mine; I only fear them."

"Fear not. Have courage. Your despair would be their victory. When you are out upon the campus, with your classmates, you will be attended by teachers. Let nothing be concealed from them. They are to be your friends and companions in your sports as well as at your studies. Think not you are to enter a gloomy prison, to be cut off from all the innocent diversions of boyhood. It is not so. You will like your studies, and relish your companions and pastimes. You must have a merry face. All must be happy. Cultivate the love of your fellows. If any of them be unamiable, strive to reform, not to vanquish them in contests of violence."

Thus the revered president of the institution and exalted ecclesiastical functionary, leveled himself to the comprehension of the boy, inspired him with confidence, and excited his ardent esteem. Every word that fell from his lips seemed to be engraven upon the memory of Ned, who was, while he listened, entirely oblivious of all other things.

Months flew past upon the wings of delight. Ned was charmed with the routine of his new existence, and Susan was perfectly happy. Mr. Mulvany felt a proud satisfaction upon witnessing the astonishing progress of his favourite pupil. It was better than any letter of recommendation. So perfectly had Ned imbibed his early lessons, so com-

pletely did he comprehend the object and application of the rules, that it was rather a pleasure than a labour to conduct him onward and upward in the scholastic ascent.

And Ned grew in stature while his mind expanded in learning. He had no serious quarrels, and but few differences of opinion with his fellows. Obedient, intelligent, and perfectly amiable, he won the friendly regard of all who knew him. But still, at times, a mournful expression of the eye and a melancholy cast of the countenance, attested that the shaft which had pierced his young heart had not been, and perhaps could never be, extracted.

These, however, were but fitful shadows sweeping along his peaceful horizon. He strove to dispel them, and almost always succeeded. If he could not laugh quite as heartily as some of his companions on the green, at least he had the art to promote their hilarity. His inventive genius originated new amusements for them, and they were ever such as obtained the sanction and approbation of the attending teachers. Nor had his promise to labour in Susan's garden been forgotten. The little space of earth had yielded under his culture a most astonishing amount of fruit and vegetables. And besides such exercises as these, he had maintained a weekly correspondence with his uncle, and an irregular one with Tim. His letters had been submitted to one of his teachers, and were not only approved, but highly complimented by him. This was a new source of pleasure for him. It was a fountain from which consolation might be derived at any time, and especially in moments when other sources failed; and thus, likewise, he was encouraged to cultivate a talent for composition.

But his college life was not to be without episodes. One day during vacation, when standing alone on the river bank, with a rod in his hand, and casting a fly on the surface of the water, to ascertain if what he had heard were true, viz: that shad might be taken in that manner, he was joined by an idle boy of the town, older and larger than himself, and somewhat famous for his mischievous propensities.

"What are you doing?" asked the boy.

"Angling," said Ned, with a kind look.

"Fishing without bait, for nothing? Well, I think you'll catch it."

Ned smiled, and continued to cast his line. And truly he met with no success. Nevertheless he evinced no impatience, being resolved to try the experiment fairly.

"Let me try it," said the boy, who was the son of a butcher from whom Susan sometimes purchased her meat. Putting down an old bag which had been thrown across his shoulder, he snatched the rod from the yielding hand of Ned, and whipped the line over the water.

"There goes the lash," he continued, seeing the hook and fly alight upon the surface some fifty feet out in the stream. But that made no difference. He cracked his whip again, saying: "Get up there, shad! Gee-woa-hoa! Blast their eyes, they won't move!"

"You whipped the hook off," said Ned. "I must put on another. Let me have the rod."

"Hook? Was you fishing with a hook?"

"Certainly."

"And that fuze on it was the fly?"

"Yes."

"And I made it fly out yonder!"

"Yes," said Ned, having by this time put on another hook.

"I'll try it again!" said the boy, seizing the rod, and with another flourish causing the second fly to follow the first.

"I have no more," said Ned. "You have spoiled my sport. I hope such was not your design."

"It was sport for me. Are you satisfied?"

"I suppose I must be. My hooks are gone, and I can go home and work in Susan's garden."

"Work? That's nonsense, if you ain't drove to it."

"It is a pleasure to me."

"May be 'tis, if fishing without bait was sport. I'll show you what I call sport."

Saying this he untied his bag and pulled forth a large black cat which had a stone fastened to its neck.

"Why that's Bob!" said Ned, recognizing his own cat, which had been brought from the city. Where did you find him?"

"In the road."

"What do you intend doing with it?"

"Chuck him under the water!"

"No, no, no!" said Ned, cutting the string with his penknife. Bob, finding himself released, ran away. The butcher's boy ran after him, but was soon distanced. Returning, and without uttering a word, he aimed a blow with his fist at Ned's face. Springing aside, Ned escaped it.

"Don't strike me! Don't repeat the attempt. I do not wish to fight—I never quarrel."

"No! You college boys are all blasted cowards!" said the other.

"I am not a coward; but still I would not wish to fight any one. I saved my cat's life, as it was my duty to do. You should not be angry with me for that."

"You be hanged! Now, if you want to save yourself from getting a thrashing, you must run for it. I want to see which can beat."

"I will not run. I am not afraid of you. But still I would rather part in peace."

"Won't run? Ain't afeard of me?"

"You are older and stronger than I am. You may be able to whip me. Still I am not afraid of you. I have done nothing wrong."

"Then you will fight!"

"I can't say what I shall do, if you attack me. Had we not better be friends!"

"Friends! Look out for your peepers! Here goes!" And he did go. Making a furious rush at Ned (who sprang aside) he fell head foremost into the river. Ned immediately held out his rod, which his antagonist seized, and by this means was extricated from his perilous position.

"Are we not to be friends, now!" asked Ned, slightly smiling.

"No! confound you?" cried the boy, in a furious tone, and preparing to renew the assault. But before he could execute his purpose, the president himself, and Mr. Parke, the aged lawyer, who had been observing them at a short distance, advanced. The butcher's boy slunk away before the indignant president could have an opportunity of rebuking him.

Mr. Parke embraced Ned, and called him his worthy nephew.

"We have been witnesses," said the principal of the college; "we have heard and seen enough, my son, to be inspired with admiration. You have behaved well, under circumstances which might have frightened an older boy, and made him forget his precepts. You have an admirable temper; cherish it."

"Temper!" exclaimed Mr. Parke; "did you ever see such cool deliberation, such perfect presence of mind, such prompt——"

"Tut, tut!" said the president, interrupting him, in a low tone; "we must not make him vain."

"Very true," said Mr. Parke; "but I must ask him one question. Ned, what would you have done, if we had not shown ourselves, and he had continued the assault?"

"I think I should have defended myself; and I might have grown as angry as he was."

"Right! and you would have vanquished him, I have no doubt."

The president made no comment; and Ned, hitherto in doubt, inferred that he would have certainly been justifiable in beating such an enemy.

Mr. Parke was in high spirits. He had in his hand a number of letters recently received from Mr. Persever, whose return from the west might be looked for in the course of a few months, perhaps weeks. He ran over the substance of the contents of the letters as they walked towards Mulvany's humble dwelling. Persever had ascertained that no sacrifices had been made by Bainton in Mexico, (whence his last letters were dated,) but that he had sustained an inconsiderable loss from the depredation of the Indians. Some half a dozen mules had been stolen in the night. That was all. The invoices of the merchants had been freely exhibited, from which it was easy to demonstrate that large profits had been realized. He likewise inspected the receipts given by Bainton, and it appeared that all the bills had been paid in ready money, with the exception of those that were to be liquidated through the house of Morales & Co., in the city of Mexico. Upon the whole, it was quite apparent that the venture

had been decidedly a successful one. A large gain had been realized. And from the estimate made by Persever, it was certain that even in the event of Ned Lorn being unable to establish his claim to that portion of the proceeds rightfully belonging to his father; and if Bainton and Mallex should succeed in keeping possession of it, still the amount of capital invested in the adventure by Mr. D. L. Parke, together with his share of the profits, and the interest which had accrued, would not fall far short of the handsome sum of \$100,000.

Before Persever had departed from St. Louis for the plains, he learned that Bainton had never won anything at the gambling houses. Such things can always be easily ascertained. No such event as Eugene described had occurred, as Persever was informed by the proprietors of the nefarious establishments. But he learned from the different brokers that Eugene had purchased drafts on the east, to a very large amount, which had been remitted to Job Mallex, and were made payable to his order. He likewise ascertained, that he had made some permanent investments in that city. He had purchased shares of bank stocks and other securities, that yielded handsome dividends; and he was also the owner of real estate in several improving portions of the town.

"Now, Ned, we'll be rich in spite of them," said Mr. Parke, slapping his nephew on the shoulder, when he had imparted the above information. "They may defraud us, so far as your father's share is concerned; but they can lay no claim to mine. And what is mine shall be yours. Although I never felt better in my life, still I intend to write my will immediately. These letters I shall leave with you. They might steal them from me. They know where I live."

"I hope they have not found out my place of abode," said Ned. "But I do not fear them quite as much as formerly."

"No, you are growing stronger every day, and have engendered some ideas about standing in one's defence," said Mr. Parke, smiling.

As they drew near the dwelling of Mr. Mulvany, they were met in the road by an ill-looking fellow, who seemed

to linger in the vicinity after they passed him. Observing that he was watching them, Mr. Parke paused, and regarded him steadfastly. The fellow immediately slunk away.

"That man is a stranger. I do not remember having seen him before," said the president.

"But I have seen him before," said the aged lawyer. "If I am not mistaken, we saw him on the boat this morning; and it strikes me I have met him in the city. He may be one of their instruments, Ned. If you see him again, mark him well."

"It would be difficult for them to carry me off from Summerton, sir. The remembrance of their success in the city, will make me guarded here."

"Very well. Here is the house. Did you know I had a pleasant surprise for you?"

"Another? It was a pleasant surprise to see you so unexpectedly."

"And so opportunely," added the president.

"Yes, sir; no doubt I was rescued from a painful chastisement."

"Step in!" said Mr. Parke, "and you will understand what I mean."

Ned was met at the door by Alice and her mother. Each of them took him by the hand, and greeted him very cordially. Alice had grown considerably since they parted. She was not so childish in her manners. But although she blushed a great deal, yet her frankness and vivacity had not been diminished. She was delighted to meet with Ned, and she said so. And he declared that he had thought of her very often, dreamt of her not unfrequently, and was continually hoping he might be permitted to see her again. But if she had not come to Summerton, he thought there never would have been an opportunity, as he could not go to the city.

"You will see one another hereafter more frequently than you did in the city," said Mrs. Dimple.

"It is true, Ned," said Susan, smiling, and detecting something resembling an expression of incredulity in the face of the boy.

"Alice has come to Summerton to stay," said Mrs.

Dimple. "The session begins, you know, in a few days. She goes to the Hall, where she is to remain a long time, perhaps five years. She is an orphan, too; and I have told the president, (who was at the moment in conversation with Mr. Parke and Mr. Mulvany,) that as you have been as brother and sister heretofore, I hope it will be no infraction of his rules to permit you to meet and converse together occasionally. At all events, during the few days between this and the beginning of the session, Alice is to make Susan's house her home."

This was joyful news for Ned. It was the happiest day of his life. He had never received so hearty a greeting and such warm attentions before from Mrs. Dimple. Nor had he before heard such endearing terms as brother and sister, in reference to himself and Alice. On the contrary, he imagined that he had once been regarded rather coldly at the mansion. He must have been mistaken; else what a change!

The truth was, Mr. Parke's revelations of Ned's prospects had not been without their effect on the discerning widow. One hundred thousand dollars, with a possibility that it might be increased to a much greater amount, had completely taken the widow's fancy by storm. It was, perhaps, the cause of Alice being sent to Summerton. The expose in the printed letter was forgotten, or regarded as a calumny. Oh, what mighty wonders riches do sometimes produce!

Moreover, the widow Dimple herself had not deemed it prudent to reject a third offer, which came from a handsome merchant, rich and retired; and she was upon the eve of once more plighting her vows at the hymenial altar. Mr. Lonsdale, the happy man, having an exceedingly youthful appearance for one of his age, the considerate mother supposed it might be well to send Alice away. She knew that her daughter could not possibly be placed in a more respectable institution, nor in one where her education, her morals, and her manners, would be more correctly formed and religiously supervised, than in that she had chosen. And if the brotherly affection which she attributed to Ned, should deepen into a more tender passion, why, what was there in it that a mother might object to?

CHAPTER XV.

NEW VICISSITUDES—NED'S PROSPECTS DIMMED AGAIN.

THE few days intervening before the commencement of the session were days of bliss to Ned and Alice. Long and refreshing promenades on the green bank of the river, where every gilded insect or painted flower was the medium of an intercommunication of sentiment; or kneeling together in the chapel, where the sweet sounds of praise, and the solemn tones of prayer, seemed to launch their thoughts beyond the skies, and permit a limited foretaste of the redeemed and sanctified in the pearly realms of heaven; such indulgences and enjoyments as these, could not but leave ineffaceable marks upon their memories, and deep impressions on their hearts, to be fondly dwelt upon in after years as the period, alas! always the brief period, of unmingled felicity.

Although Susan or Mr. Mulvany, and often both, accompanied Alice and Ned in their rambles, the delighted young companions never experienced the slightest restraint imposed on their innocent prattle. They said nothing more or less, nor differently from what they would have spoken if they had been left entirely alone. The long walk on the luxuriantly green bank of the placid stream was their favorite haunt. The row of trees sheltered them from the sun, and the fresh breezes from the sparkling and dimpled water fanned their merry faces.

The only drawback to those blissful moments, was an occasional tear which was perceived to fall from Susan's eye, when she heard Mr. Mulvany struggling with an inveterate cough. For some months previously he had been annoyed with a hoarseness, to which but little attention had been hitherto paid; but now there were other symptoms; pain in the chest, discharges of blood from the lungs, and sensations of chilliness followed by fever. Susan had witnessed the fatal termination of too many cases of similar symptoms in the city, not to be very much alarmed. But Mr. Mulvany perceiving it, strove to dispel her appre-

hensions. He was more than ever assiduous in his kind attentions, and often apparently exhilarated in his spirits. But his sparkling eye, and rosy cheek, and panting breath, were evil omens in Susan's estimation.

His disease had been engendered in the church, where the sexton is so often a cruel executioner. A side door was sure to be left open just far enough for a stratum of cold air to assail his neck, while the rest of the atmosphere, being that which he felt and breathed, was of a very high temperature. His protestations were of no avail; his injunctions forgotten or disregarded, until he found himself a victim of the prevailing malady.

It is believed by many of our physicians, that the damp sepulchral atmosphere; sometimes the too hot and dry air; but most frequently the streams of cold wind, whistling in from the doors and windows of our churches, occasion more diseases and deaths than the heat and pestilential vapors of the ball-rooms.

But the condition of Mr. Mulvany not being understood by Ned and Alice, did not trouble them with painful forebodings of the future. In consequence of the relation in which Susan stood to them both, but more particularly in pursuance of the wishes expressed by Alice's mother, the youthful friends enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing each other at least once a week for the next ensuing several months.

There was but one dark shadow which flitted athwart the vision of Ned, during this, the brightest period of his young existence. It was the scowling individual who had attracted the attention of his uncle on the day he visited Summerton. This was Dick Sutly. He never addressed a word to Ned; but seemed to be ever watching in the vicinity of Susan's dwelling. In his solitary rambles, Ned had never met with him; it was always near the dwelling that he crossed his path. He had seen him standing opposite after nightfall, with his eyes elevated to the second story. Who was this mysterious individual? What could he want? These were questions often asked by Susan, to whom Ned communicated all his suspicions. It was easy to ask questions, but who was to answer them! However, both Ned and Mulvany had seen the stranger once or

twice in company with the butcher's boy, of pugnacious notoriety. This was at least a circumstance sufficient to convince them that he meditated no good to any one. And it was determined that one of the constables of the town should have his attention directed towards so suspicious a person.

But before the morrow, when the information was to have been given, the stranger had withdrawn himself. He had at last made known his mission. The window of the rear room in the second story had been entered. A ladder, taken from a dwelling in the vicinity, which was undergoing repairs, was found standing against Susan's house. The letters which Mr. Parke had deposited with Ned, were gone!

This was the first blow in a new series of disasters. In vain did the sympathizing and astute rector of the college endeavor to dispel the dark cloud which enveloped the orphan boy, by assuring him that no serious consequences could be involved in the loss of the letters, as the arrival of the writer of them was looked for daily. If he had no copies of them, he could remember their contents. The only possible advantage they could be to Mallex and Bainton, who it was not to be doubted had caused their abstraction, was the knowledge they would obtain of the object and operations of Persever in the west. Persever would bring memoranda of the incidents of his journey, and authenticated depositions of the witnesses, whose testimony might be required. What, then, could the letters accomplish? They might warn the defendants a few days in advance of the actual commencement of proceedings, and that was all.

Ned and Susan thought differently, although they allowed the reasoning of their benevolent friend to be quite correct. They could not suppose that such an enterprise would be set on foot for any object short of one of the first importance; and they were satisfied it was an indication that their enemies were meditating new acts of hostility.

Ned, however, was advised to write his uncle an account of the occurrence immediately. He did so, and placed it in the post-office himself.

It was soon generally remarked that the ill-looking man,

who had been so often in the vicinity of Susan's house, was nowhere to be seen in Summertown. The butcher's boy now made his idle rounds alone, but always with a significant smile on his lip, when he met with any of the inmates of the house which had been robbed. This, together with the remembrance that he was a companion of the one on whom suspicion rested, made Susan and Ned believe he had participated in the crime. Several days elapsed before any reply to Ned's letter was received. This delay was the more incomprehensible, as all former letters, on indifferent subjects, had been promptly answered by Mr. Parke. The reason might have been known, if they had taken the papers; but since the publication of the slanderous letter of Mallex, which had so deeply wounded Ned—although it had been inserted and paid for as an advertisement—the family had dispensed with the modicum of daily information supplied by the journals.

An answer, however, was received. It was brought by Tim, and it was evidently not superscribed by Ned's uncle. Susan and Ned, too eager to exchange salutations and greetings with Tim, to think of the probable subject matter of the letter, suffered it to lie unopened for some minutes on the table, where Tim had thrown it down with some violence.

"You look better than usual," said Susan, smiling; "I'm afraid Betty has captured you at last. I'm afraid so, because I don't think I could approve of the match."

Tim had a habit of pinching himself on the knee when he was excited; and on this occasion, he made a wrench of such extraordinary vigor, that he winced under the infliction, and then rubbed the place briskly with his other hand. Ned could not avoid smiling.

"Betty looks better, too, so they say: but it won't do. She may tease my life out of me; but I say it won't do." Here he gave himself another cruel twinge.

"No, you can't afford it," said Susan.

"But I'm glad you think I look better, Susan. Ned looks better. Dang it, how he grows! But you are paler and thinner, Susan; and Mr. Mulvany (who sat apart abstractedly, poring over his books) looks awful bad."

"True, Tim," said Susan, mournfully. "But how are the rest of our friends in the city?"

"Mrs. Dimple is gayer and more fashionable than ever. Since Miss Alice's been away, her mother has completely turned to be a young miss herself, and is going to be married—so they say—to the handsome Mr. Lonsdale."

"She can afford it," said Ned, smiling. "But how is my uncle?" When do they look for the return of Mr. Persever?"

Tim pinched himself with both hands, and cast his eyes upon the letter. "Mr. Perseverance is back, and writ that letter. No, don't!" he exclaimed, seeing Ned take it up, being in the act of breaking the seal. "Ned don't do it, yet awhile. Don't, if you please!"

"Tim!" cried Susan, raising her voice suddenly, and even startling Mr. Mulvany, who arose and approached them; "Tim! what is the matter?" You are trembling! I see your hair rising up on your head!"

"Su—us—an! be eas—y—don't be alarmed! Bad news musn't skeer us. I'm resigned and calm! Don't be narvous!" The poor fellow's hands now trembled so violently that they lost the power of pinching.

"Perhaps the letter will explain everything," said Ned, once more intent on breaking the seal.

"If you please, Ned, don't!" said Tim, between his chattering teeth. "Don't for a few moments. Only give Susan and yourself time to get composed. You must bear it all like me—me and Mr. Mulvany."

Mr. Mulvany had partaken of Tim's agitation, and sank down on a chair, pale and exhausted. In truth, Susan and Ned were the only ones who might really boast of some degree of composure. Ned's hand was quite steady, and his countenance firm. He had passed through so many trials, and had pondered so deeply on the distressing events and circumstances of his life, that he seemed to be prepared for any new vicissitude that might occur.

"Tim," said he, "tell me that my uncle is well, and I care not what else may have happened, or can happen. As for the money which they say I ought to recover, let it go. I shall prepare myself to earn a livelihood."

"Oh, Ned, I—I—can't!" said Tim, making a tremendous grab at his knees.

"Is he sick—dead?" cried Susan.

"Now, Susan, that's wrong in you! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! I didn't think you could be so cruel to poor Ned."

"Cruel to me? She is not, Tim. But I am prepared for the worst! I understand you! I will read the letter. Tears may blind my eyes, if my uncle be dead; but I will wipe them away and read on."

He did so. Mr. Persever informed him briefly and feelingly of the death of Mr. Parke. It occurred the night preceding the arrival of the young lawyer from the west. Instead of high hopes, and congratulatory smiles, he beheld the badge of death at his door, when he alighted. It appeared that during the night, Mr. Parke had probably been seized by one of his distressing fits of coughing, which proved fatal. The physician in attendance, observing the symptoms of suffocation, and learning the nature of his malady, seemed to think there was nothing unusual or extraordinary in the event. Such a result he supposed might have been anticipated, from the character of the disease with which the old man had been so long afflicted.

He had purposely delayed writing to Summerton, until after the funeral. The attendance of Ned, he thought, would have been impolitic and unnecessary. It would have given rise to unpleasant remarks, and could have done no good. Eugene Bainton had been one of the principal mourners. Mallex, however, had been an active participant in the funeral arrangements.

Mr. Persever proceeded to state that he had obtained sufficient material in the west, on which to have based an action, had Mr. Parke survived, with every reason to hope for a desirable result. But now, at least for the present, he knew not what to do. He would consult with others, learned in the law, and ascertain whether the probability of success, under all the circumstances, would warrant proceedings in behalf of Ned. He feared, however, it was a desperate case. The statement of the matron, and the certificate of the attending physician, who yet lived, could hardly be overthrown by the testimony of Susan and himself. There was an immense amount of wealth involved in the issue, and in possession of the defendants, who would not spare it in reaping the great advantages it

might produce for them. He would consider the chances well before he moved in the business, and have the light of the best intellects to aid him.

Another point he would consider. Whether an advantageous compromise might not be effected. If Bainton and Mallex, (now avowed partners,) would be content to relinquish the share justly due to Mr. D. L. Parke, retaining undisputed possession of Mr. John Parke's proportion of the capital and profits, he thought Ned should not hesitate to close with them. These, however, were merely loose suggestions, to be considered in future. He would, when the effect of the recent sad occurrences had passed away, resume the subject, and continue the correspondence with his young friend.

He concluded by stating that another difficulty had arisen by reason of the omission of his aged legal friend, to execute a will. From the papers and memoranda found on his table, it was evidently his intention to write his will about the time of his death. Thus, it was supposed, he had some premonitions of his approaching dissolution. These memoranda furnished sufficient evidence to believe it was his intention to leave whatever fortune he possessed or might lay claim to in future, to his "nephew Edward Lorn Parke." The name was found in the handwriting of the deceased, on several fragments of paper, as well as in the commencement of a formal will. But, unfortunately, the intention of the deceased had not been consummated, and it was not clear what disposition would now be made of the several thousand dollars found to his credit in one of the banks. An administrator would be appointed by the proper court, and he (Persever) would still watch over the interests of Ned. But if any other relative, however distant, should come forward, there would arise a contest of a lively interest to other parties not apparently concerned in the ultimate disposition of the funds alluded to. If none such should come forward within a sufficient space of time, then the field would be left clear for them, (Ned and his counsel,) and as there were no indications of a purpose on the part of Eugene to claim the money belonging undisputedly to Mr. D. L. Parke, and his legal representatives, he thought he perceived the means of opening a way,

(provided they recovered the money in bank,) and without exciting the suspicions of the enemy, to the ultimate attainment of the great object they had been pursuing. The principle which might enable them to recover in the one instance, would apply equally to the other.

But Mr. Persever would not, on that mournful occasion, dwell any longer on the subject. He would write again, after taking a careful survey of the whole ground. And in the meantime he advised Ned to remain where he was, if Susan was still able and disposed to keep him with her. Perhaps his retreat might not be discovered, or if discovered, he might not be molested there. But, whenever he should be resolved to return to the city and face his enemies, whether successful in obtaining his uncle's money or not, Persever assured him that his house would be open to receive him, and insisted that it should be his home, at least until he had one of his own that might be preferable to it.

"Never—never shall you leave me, Ned!" cried Susan. "I have money enough. I have not spent any of the thousand dollars your uncle gave me. I said I couldn't afford it, when they wanted me to buy so many things. It was for you, Ned—your uncle gave it to me for you, and you shall have it."

"I do not want money, Susan," said Ned, with a pale brow, but a brave lip. "All I want is a good education. Give me that—only let me remain a few years here with Mr. Mulvany, under the supervision of our good and great president, and I shall snap my fingers at all my enemies."

"Adhere to that idea, Ned," said Mr. Mulvany, and you will be happy. And, now, I have to inform you that the sum of five hundred dollars your uncle destined for me, has remained untouched, or is rather invested with Susan's money at interest. I had saved enough previously to furnish this house, and did not stand in need of more."

"And me, too!" said Tim, industriously pinching himself; "I've got how much, Susan? I've not looked into the Savings Banks' book since you gave it to me."

"Not a great deal, Tim—but it's enough to help along, if it should be needed."

"In a pinch," said Ned, half smiling.

"But it'll be more, Ned. I'll work all my life for you."

"Thank you, Tim—but I intend to work for myself, and for the purpose of repaying the kindness of all who have assisted me in my destitute childhood."

"No, Ned!" you shan't work!" said Susan.

"No, indeed, while we've got fingers and toes," said Tim.

"But I shall. I shall study hard. Only let me have a crust and a few clothes, until my education be completed——"

"Ned is in the right, Susan," said Mr. Mulvany. "Idleness is an evil, and a curse to any one. He will not work as you do, though. He has been blessed with more than ordinary intellectual powers, which, when cultivated properly, may enable him to repay you all. He has the resolution, and it would be a pleasure for him to do it. I regret I shall not witness the success I predict for him," added Mr. Mulvany, with a sigh.

"You will not?" asked Ned.

The teacher replied with a mournful shake of the head.

They were interrupted by the entrance of the postman with a letter for Ned. It was postmarked Camden, and ran as follows:

"My poor lad. I have accidentally learned your history, and cannot divest myself of the sympathy it excites in my breast. I am old and without children. My wealth must descend to some one, and who can have a better title to it than yourself, a friendless orphan——"

"Dang it, that's a lie!" said Tim, interrupting Ned, who was reading the extraordinary epistle aloud.

——"Without fortune or kindred. But you must live with me in my fine house in the city of New Orleans. Consult your acquaintances, and decide immediately. I am willing to deposit two thousand dollars, in the hands of any person you may name, as a guaranty of the faithful performance of my pledge. If you accede to my proposition, address Y. Z., at the Camden office, without delay."

They all stared in astonishment, and the letter was handed from one to the other, and gazed at in amazement, as if something in addition might be revealed by the paper.

"Dang it!" cried Tim, holding it half-crumpled and

upside down in his left hand, while the right one fumbled for something in the deep pocket of his breeches—"I've seen them pot-hooks and twisted eels before. Here, Ned," he continued, producing the note written by Mallex on Christmas eve, which he had picked up in the stock-jobber's office, "look at this! They're as much alike as two peas."

And they were. It was a peculiar autography, such as could not be disguised or mistaken. The old note that Tim had so faithfully kept ran thus: "My dear Fawner—The bearer is sent to you for a book which you know I left somewhere in the office. You can find it in time for him to leave you *somewhere between nine and ten o'clock*, can't you? You understand. J. M."

"Undoubtedly these were written by the same hand!" said Mr. Mulvany.

"You won't go, Ned," asked Susan.

"Go! No—not now. A few years more, however, and I will meet these gentlemen as often as they may wish. Susan, they are making a man of me before my time!" True enough! Ned was rapidly becoming versed in some of the deepest lessons of the world, and he was to be no inapt scholar.

"Don't even write to him, Ned!" said Susan, fearful there might be danger in that.

"I shall pay no attention to it, Susan. I will merely send it to Mr. Persever. Tim, place both of the letters in his hands."

"I will!" said Tim, placing them in his vest pocket and endeavoring to button his coat over them.

"Why, Tim!" said Susan, "you've lost all your buttons."

"No, I didn't lose 'em—at least not all of 'em. It's Betty's doings! She pulled two off—she's always holding me by my buttons—so I cut off the others to get rid of her."

"Ah, Tim! said Ned, "I'm sorry I can't laugh. My heart is heavy. The last of my kindred is gone!—gone! just when I began to love him as a good uncle should be loved!"

The dejected looks and mournful tone of Ned, brought tears to the eyes of all.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DAY OF PLEASURE—A NIGHT OF MISERY.

MALLEX and Bainton were in high spirits. They sat like conquerors at the house of the former, with fractured champagne bottles and jingling glasses before them. They had dined together, and prolonged their sitting till ten o'clock in the night. So exhilarated had they become under the influence of their recent success, and the imbibition of their sparkling stimulant; and so excessive was the expression of their joy on the occasion of their supposed triumph, that the extravagance of their speeches, songs and actions knew no bounds. But before Mallex gave a free reign to his inclinations, he had taken the precaution to send his faithful old clerk, Fawner, to bed. The obsequious servitor dined that day for the first time with his employer, and literally, in obedience to his principal's commands, he had imbibed a large quantity of wine and brandy. Mallex likewise made his white waiter, staring in astonishment, drink bumpers with him, and towards the end of the feast he drugged a glass of wine which effectually silenced and deafened the unsuspecting Milesian, who now lay in a temporary state of insensibility under the table, whither his master had contemptuously thrust him.

"Yes; after all, it was a wild-geese chase!" said Eugene, referring to the journey of Persever.

"And his letters are in our possession, after all the trouble of writing them," responded Mallex.

"And the one to whom his precious revelations were made, has opportunely departed to that bourne whence no traveller returns!"

"Ned, alone, remains. He has not yet answered my letter."

"He will not answer it. What would you do with the lad, Mallex, if you had him?"

"Provide for him sumptuously. Make him forget that he ever had a father."

"I'm afraid of you, Job!" said Eugene, shaking his

head. "That boy has my sister's blood in his veins. Beware you do not injure him!"

"Injure him! Is it no injury to keep his fortune? Who keeps it?"

"You and I. But I mean his body; his life. I would rather not have his money than to have his blood on my head. You understand. I saw a Satanic twinkle in the hag's eye when we buried the old lawyer. I could not comprehend it. If there was any foul play, God knows, and you know, I had no participation in it."

"Oh, of course. But your purse participates in the proceeds resulting from his death."

"True. You may have betrayed me into the commission of a constructive robbery; but you shall never make me a murderer, as long as I have my senses."

"Nonsense, man! What do you mean? You have lost your senses, now. But we must not quarrel. It would be the certain destruction of us both."

"It would so, Job—and hence we must be at peace. But for God's sake let us strive to be virtuous and upright hereafter. Let us be satisfied with what we have already accomplished."

"Very well. Who is dissatisfied! Not I."

"Farewell, then!" said Eugene, rising, and with difficulty finding his way to the front door, Mallex guiding him. As he descended the high marble steps, they were ascended by Mrs. Sutly. He did not notice her, but hastened away with an unsteady step.

Mallex was instantly sobered on beholding the evil-omened hag. She seized his hand with avidity, and demanded an immediate interview. She passed into the hall, leaving her son Dick, the sombre outlines of whose form the quick eye of Mallex had discerned near the curb, leaning half-observed against a tree-box.

"Well, what have you got to say, now?" asked the woman, when seated within, her horrible smile and perpetual shake of the head quite perceptible, notwithstanding the light had been greatly diminished.

"What have I to say?" responded Mallex, in some surprise. "I was listening for your speech—for the speech which you came hither to deliver."

"Can't you say well-done, faithful sarvent—or something of that sort!"

"Servant of the devil!"

"Stop—stop—stop, now, honey!" said she, placing her half-palsied hand familiarly upon his shrinking shoulder. "You may be right; I may be the devil's sarvent; I think I am; but I sarve *you*! Say, wasn't it well done?"

"It was, if you did it. But the doctors say it was the asthma."

"The doctors! Ha—ha—ha! They might've told another tale if it hadn't been for me."

"For you?"

"Yes, honey dear! The resurrection-men got his body, and I 'spected you had it done——"

"I did! I did not want any post mortem examinations."

"I thought so, my sugar loaf!"

"Don't call me any of your loathsome names!"

"Can't help it. It's my good natur. Well, they took him to Jack's——"

"Cadaver's! How did *you* know it?"

"Why, my darling man, Meg Cadaver is my sister! Didn't you know it? No! No matter; but she is. I was out there and took a peep at the bodies, and discovered the long lawyer. He was a tall one! Well, it struck me it warn't good sense to send him right straight to the doctors. They might be hunting after the part of the asthma which killed him; and if they couldn't find it, they might find out what did, and then you and me, my beloved charmer, might be suffocated ourselves."

"True! Stupid fool that I was! You *have* done well!"

"Aha! I thought so. My dear luscious sugar lump, you talk sensible and kind, now! I know what's what! I made Jack bury him in a ditch."

"But, after all, are you quite certain it was not the asthma that killed him? What did you——"

"Jest what you ordered! I recollected every word, and done it all edzactly as you commanded, my sweet master."

"Sweet d—I!"

"If you like it better. It was your own plan, and a famous one it was."

"But did you let Jack Cadaver know anything about it?"

"No, honey; he's not to be trusted. He loves people when they're dead; but he hasn't the spunk to choke a baby."

"I'm glad of it. You did well again."

"Thank you, sweet taffy. But my sister Meg is different. Nothing could be done without her. She made Jack bury the body. Jack obeys her——"

"Fury! and you let her into the secret?"

"Couldn't help it, my lovely pet; I was obleeged to do it."

"Another witness! Confound——"

"Stop, darling! I was obleeged to do it, or else let the body go to the doctors. You had him took up—so it was your own doings."

"That's undeniable! It was my fault. But it's over now. Here's your money. Be prudent. Are you still at Persever's?"

"Yes—but I'm to go off soon. The little ones can't bear my shaking head, and the lady has threatened to dismiss my darter, if I don't leave. I'll go out to Jack's. This money's right, is it?"

"Yes. I saw Dick out in the street, didn't I!"

"Yes. Dick's a good chap. Do you want him? I'm training him right. But the fool must marry—and then look out for poverty, and doublets."

"Give him this; it's for getting me the letters. They were of no account, but——"

"La, sweet, he didn't write 'em!"

"I know it. Is there anything else you want?"

"No, darling. If you should have occasion for my services, you'll find me out at Jack's. Good bye, honey dear!"

The disgusting creature then vanished. But her image remained to plague the mind of the guilty voluptuary. This was the sequel to that day's festivity and joyousness. But no human ear listened to his groans, no human eye beheld his writhings, as he lay uneasily upon his couch that night.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAW AND MORALITY.

PERSEVER met Mallex and Bainton, attended by their legal adviser, Radley, according to appointment. The meeting had been proposed by Persever. He desired to ascertain the dispositions of the opposing party before instituting any proceedings in the courts. An amicable adjustment might be suggested, which his client, Ned Lorn, could embrace. It would be better to be satisfied with an ample slice, than engage in a doubtful controversy for the whole loaf, which might result in the recovery of no bread at all.

They met in Radley's office, where many ponderous volumes were displayed upon the table. The last remaining advocate of the orphan's cause immediately perceived that the opposing party were neither to be surprised nor intimidated. It would be useless for him to enter into a recapitulation of the particulars of his recent journey. They doubtless possessed his letters. His only hope was a compromise.

"Well, Persever," said Radley, "what have you to demand?" He then added, in a low tone, while his principals were whispering at a distance, "Gad, you got ten thousand dollars once. Why was I not present? Suppose I give you an idea now, by which as much more can be had—will you divide the commission with me?"

"No, sir!" said Persever.

"Oh, very well! We shall be hearty antagonists. But, Persever," he again added in a whisper, "recollect you are not to betray me."

"Mr. Radley," said the young attorney, pursuing solely the idea which had induced him to ask the conference, "there can be no difficulty in proving that D. L. Parke was entitled to a very large sum. I have documents in my possession sufficient to establish that fact."

"Granted. Say we admit it. What then? Suppose we grant you a *cognovit*; can you claim a *donatio causa*

mortis? Not you! There is no heir either *in esse* or *in posse*. In short, sir, we are in a situation to bid defiance to the whole world—unless,” he added in a very low tone, “some distant relative of the deceased—other than this Ned—could be produced, which might be easily done if you and I were to go in quest of him.”

“Is that the feeling of your clients?” asked Persever, paying no attention to the base proposition of Radley.

“It is!” said Mallex and Bainton themselves, drawing their chairs near the table, and having heard only that portion of the dialogue which was spoken in a loud voice.

“Then we must go into court!”

“We are prepared,” said they.

“But who is to be the plaintiff?” asked Radley.

“Aye, who employs you, Persever?” repeated Mallex.

“I am a volunteer again, I suppose,” replied Persever, smiling, as he recollected the scene in the mayor’s court.

“In whose behalf?” asked Mallex.

“Ned Lorn’s. We think we can prove he is the son of John Parke, and the nephew and heir of D. L. Parke.”

“Perhaps you can. Almost anything can be proved. But we are assured we can produce the strongest proofs to the contrary. You have seen the physician’s certificate, Persever,” continued Mallex; “but that is not all the testimony we have. The nurse who attended him, and the undertaker who shrouded and coffined him, are still living, and ready to testify.”

“Perhaps it might be the most advisable course for us to have the matter tried at this time,” said Radley; “for at some future day our witnesses may be removed and our certificate lost or destroyed. Eh, Persever? What say you? Are you prepared to furnish the plaintiff with the necessary means?”

Persever understood the innuendo, but made no reply.

“The funds to the credit of old Mr. Parke in bank,” said Bainton, “cannot be applied to such a purpose.”

“You think not?” asked the young attorney.

“I am so advised by my counsel.”

“Do *you* lay any claim to the deceased’s effects?”

“No—not exactly,” said Eugene. “But who does? In whose behalf can you claim them?”

"In Ned Lorn's."

"Ned Lorn's!" iterated Mallex, with a contemptuous frown. "And can you suppose, Mr. Persever, that we intend to lie still and suffer you to establish Ned Lorn's right to that money? We should be fools indeed, not to perceive what might be the effect of such a decision. You must not suppose us to be capable of any such folly. We are aware, as well as you can be, that the establishment of the principle leading to the recovery of the deposit in bank, would enable you to recover any other assets belonging to the late D. L. Parke, as well as any that might be claimed by the heir of his deceased brother John."

"I presume the uncle had a right to dispose of his own property."

"Yes. But he made no will."

"How do you know that?"

"I know it—and that is sufficient."

"Documents can be produced showing, in his own handwriting, that he acknowledged Edward Lorn Parke to be his nephew and heir."

"But they were not signed," said Mallex.

"And Edward Lorn Parke cannot be produced!" said Eugene.

"We'll see! said Persever, rising, and feeling convinced, however differently he might strive to appear, that his opponents were entrenched behind almost impregnable defences.

"You may produce his bones in court," said Mallex; "but nothing more. They can alarm nobody."

"Gentlemen!" said Persever, "I believe we can arrive at no amicable result, no settlement, no accomodation."

"We think not!" said Mallex. "We met you at your own solicitation, to hear what you might have to say. We have heard you. What other result can we arrive at, than to deem ourselves henceforth justly exempted from every species of molestation? No one appears with any shadow of a just claim against us——"

"You know within your own hearts, whether or not the youth I represent is treated justly!" said Persever.

"If we have treated him unjustly," said Bainton, "the courts are open for him; let him seek redress."

"I was not referring to any legal claim," said Ned's friend.

"And if there be merely a moral one," said Mallex, "there was no need of a *lawyer* to urge it."

"I think differently, sir!" said Persever. "A lawyer may be a friend and moral adviser, as well as a legal advocate. I recognize the obligations of honesty and honor, as well as those imposed by the statutes. And I am to inform you that I do not embark in the cause of this unprotected youth, merely for the purpose of realizing pecuniary emolument. Be assured that whatever may be his destiny, I shall henceforth be his friend, in every sense of the word. If it be necessary for him to have a legal prosecutor or defender at the bar, I shall serve him to my utmost ability. If he be subjected to private injuries—if his person or character be assailed hereafter, I here solemnly declare that I shall hold myself in readiness to vindicate his cause under any circumstances. If there be no legal remedy, his slanderers, whoever they may be, shall be held personally accountable. If any violence, any *murderous* stratagem be resorted to, his enemies must abide the consequences!"

"You cannot mean *us*, surely!" exclaimed both Mallex and Bainton.

"You know best what the boy has already suffered. I know the treatment which both his father and uncle—now in their graves—received at your hands. God knows whether or not their injuries killed them——"

"Everybody knows what killed D. L. Parke," said Mallex.

"And who shall be answerable! Gentlemen," continued Persever, "You are aware that I have an intimate knowledge of the history of the transactions of Parkes and Bainton. Every circumstance, from the inception to the end of the adventure, has been revealed to me. But both the capitalists of that concern are in their graves. They cannot molest you in the courts. They are done with the affairs of this world, and are doubtless happy in a better one. You believe in a future existence?"

"You are not our confessor!" said Mallex.

"True. But it might not be the worst policy for you to confess to me what you know—what I am sure you know—that Ned Lorn is the legitimate son and heir of John Parke."

"Your assumption is very unjustifiable, sir. Is it your purpose to intimidate us?" responded Mallex.

"No; but to warn you. Injustice cannot prevail in the end. Where a wrong has been committed, reparation must follow; and every species of crime that is perpetrated, will be followed sooner or later by punishment. I have made the declaration in your presence that Ned Lorn is the rightful heir of John Parke, his father, and of D. L. Parke, his uncle; and that you wrongfully, criminally, withhold his inheritance."

"It is a grave charge, sir!" said Mallex.

"It is, sir; and unto the grave itself, will I maintain it! I have not uttered it without weighing the consequences. Henceforth the enemies of the boy shall be my enemies."

"Why do you persist in saying the boy has enemies?" asked Mallex, waiving the "grave" charge.

"Oh, perhaps I am mistaken, and after all they are his good friends!" said Persever, ironically, and smiling bitterly. "I had forgotten a recent tender of their love."

"What mean you?" asked Mallex.

"Can you not guess? Have you no knowledge of a kind, affectionate old childless gentlemen, who would provide for the boy if he would only accompany him to a distant city?"

"I know no such old gentleman."

"But you may recognize his handwriting. Know you it not?"

Persever exhibited the letter written from Camden, and read it aloud.

"It is well!" said Mallex.

"It was a good offer!" said Bainton.

"It is well," repeated Mallex, "that we should know our enemies."

"And so long as the devil serves you, rely upon it, that while we strive not to tremble, we shall never cease to watch and pray!" said Persever, departing abruptly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FLIGHT OF TIME, AND ITS MEMORIES

YEARS had rolled past, and time had wrought its changes. Susan still occupied her old demi-cottage. Ned was with her still, a tall young man, a fine scholar, and exceedingly poor, for his fortune was yet withheld from him. Mr. Mulvany had long since been deposited in the silent grave.

Susan's foster-brother, honest Tim, was a near neighbour. He cultivated a small farm in the vicinity, which he had leased, and regularly visited the city once a week to dispose of his vegetables, chickens, &c. He had succumbed at last to Betty Simple. Her importunities in the end had proved to be irresistible, and he married her, as he declared, for the sake of peace and quietness. Mrs. Dimple, now Mrs. Lonsdale, had promoted the match, and had given Betty quite a handsome sum as a dowry. As for Tim, she aided him in stocking his farm, and became security for the payment of his rent.

When it was ascertained that nothing could be obtained, through the promptings of justice, from Bainton and Mallex, and that the tribunals of the country would not avail him in his just demand, Ned had determined to quit the college, and perhaps the town, and go in quest of some sort of employment by which he might earn an honest livelihood. But the good president of the institution promptly combated the wild notion, and combated it successfully. He informed Ned that when his deceased uncle was in Summer-ton (at the time he appeared on the margin of the river and rescued him from the assaults of the butcher's boy) he had deposited with him a certain sum of money. The president would not say how large a sum; but it sufficed for the time being; and when it should be exhausted it would be made known by the presentation of a demand for the advance payment of an ensuing term. The same reply was made to Susan the next year, when she tendered money to the principal. Year after year it was the same. No demand was made, and Ned had graduated with honour.

A situation as teacher was tendered Ned in the institution, and he had this kind proposition under consideration at the time when the thread of his history is resumed. It was the beginning of a vacation, and hence he had several weeks to meditate upon the matter.

But the anguish of poverty was not the only pang experienced by Ned. He was, or imagined himself to be, deeply, hopelessly, in love with Alice. He had not seen her, however, since the completion of her education. And even before that event, her mother, or rather her mother's lord and master, as Mr. Lonsdale proved to be, had acquiesced in the necessity of a most rigid adherence to the rules of the institution, which forbade any intercourse between the scholars of the two establishments, and indeed between the girls and any young gentlemen whatever. Yet this interdiction had not been enforced before the youthful lovers had exchanged their vows of eternal constancy and affection. And subsequently, as ever was and will be, obstacles and absence only increased the intensity of the supposed inextinguishable flame.

On several occasions, however, before the departure of Alice, when Mrs. Lonsdale visited Summerton unattended by her lord, the lovers had briefly met in her presence, at Susan's cottage, and renewed their vows in a language the mother had long since forgotten. Every glance of the flashing eye was a page, every fixed gaze a volume. But it was a sealed book to Mrs. Dimple, who had long ceased to contemplate their union as a possible event. The loss of Ned's fortune, by the death of his uncle, rendering it an ineligible match, Mrs. Lonsdale dismissed the matter from her mind, and fondly supposed that her simple determination was equivalent to an extinction of the project. It is ever thus. When our own light of love is extinguished, we imagine that total darkness universally prevails. When the fires of romance are quenched in our own hearts, and we look upon the faces of the young and the old, the repulsive and the beautiful, with the same emotions, how are we to suppose that an ardent youth, familiar though he may be with the glowing language and the electric ideas of the classic poets of antiquity, can fall down and worship a young dimple? We are astonished, simply because we have become oblivious of our own youthful emotions.

Cupid seemed to have done his work, to have consummated his mischief, and Ned Lorn, the sighing lover, often wandered alone along the green margin of the river, or traversed the solitudes of the meadows and silent woods, recalling in fancy the bright form which had so frequently accompanied him thither, and listening in imagination to the music of her words. Every object, however insignificant, that had ever arrested her attention, whether animate or inanimate, whether bird, insect, tree or pebble, was halloed in his memory. And with such mementoes around him, he penned many a sonnet for the village paper, which he knew she regularly perused every week.

This was now his only means of direct communication. The epistolary correspondence which ensued upon the departure of Alice from Summerton, when discovered by Mr. Lonsdale, was peremptorily forbidden, and from that moment it had entirely ceased. Yet innocent messages had been exchanged through the medium of Tim and Betty, in despite of Mr. Lonsdale's vigilance. It was through this channel that the arrangement was effected by which Alice was to receive a sonnet once a week in the poet's corner of the paper. They were all signed "Abelard," and addressed to "Heloise." All his rambles, all his romantic thoughts, all his throes of passion, were regularly chronicled in these sonnets, and fully comprehended by his sympathizing mistress. She did not deem it necessary to permit even her mother to know the infinite delight the village paper afforded her; and her dictatorial and pompous step-father of course was incapable of comprehending anything of the kind. He was familiar with all the mysteries of checks, stocks, scrip and dividends, and could readily fancy the advantages and enjoyments they might command in social life; but he had never truly loved, and had never read a poem in his life.

But although no one besides Alice could appreciate fully the thoughts and inspirations of the poet, yet there were many in the ancient town of Summerton, and elsewhere, who could enjoy good poetry; and there was a depth of feeling, and a classic felicity in the sonnets, which did not fail to attract attention. The consequence was that the author's real name became known to the leading inhabitants of the place, and his society was somewhat sought after.

Summerton might very appropriately be compared to some of the rural villages in the vicinity of London, where many persons of rank and fortune retire to avoid the foul air and noise of the city. At the time of which we are writing there were several rich dowagers, and as many wealthy old maids, who had taken up their permanent abode in the village. There were, besides, the wives and families of several commodores and generals absent on duty in the public service. Thus, while a delightful rural retreat was secured, and while from their central position, they might, by a short travel, and in a brief space of time, be in either Philadelphia or New York, yet the sojourners at Summerton always found among themselves, perhaps, a better class of society than might be met with anywhere else within the limits of the United States. For, in addition to the characters above enumerated, there were resident authors of distinction, philosophers, statesmen occasionally, professors in the literary institutions, a learned and venerated prelate; theologians, polemics, bankers, (whose offices were in the city,) capitalists, (fled from the city to escape the intolerable burden of taxation,) officers of chartered institutions, who could leave the city after three o'clock, and get home to dinner; and tradesmen and others, whose laudable object was economy. And Summerton afforded the important advantage of being equally agreeable, both as a place of summer and winter residence. Families permanently located there escaped the annoyance and expense of being under the necessity of dispersing once a year.

It was not at all strange, then, that the meritorious sonnets of "Abelard," should have attracted some attention in Summerton, where many of the inhabitants were possessed of a discriminating taste, and had sufficient leisure to indulge the delights of literature. Nor that Ned, with his erect, tall stature, his high forehead, restless eagle-eye, and pale, though animated face, should be invited to the quiet little parties of the rich dowagers and aristocratic families in retirement, who were pleased with the society of the young and the gifted. And it must not be denied that Ned was highly gratified at their delicate attentions; and had it not been for his smitten heart, his

vulnus immedicabile, he might have chosen a partner among them, and been comfortably settled for life—if not a matrimonial partner—at least a partner at whist.

CHAPTER XIX.

NED MEETS WITH BAINTON—A SMILE OF FORTUNE.

NED had been in the habit of visiting the city once or twice a year; and during these visits had always been the guest of Mr. Persever. But hitherto their consultations had not resulted in any proceedings against Mallex and Bainton. The former did not on any occasion choose to recognize Ned as an acquaintance; but the latter had of late evinced quite a different disposition. When Ned was in the city, Eugene not only sought to encounter him in a friendly manner in the street, but had on one occasion pressed him in an urgent and serious manner to visit him at his house. Ned's conduct was reserved and circumspect, rather than defiant and passionate. He declined the invitation in respectful terms, and passed on without a desire to prolong the conversation.

It was during the last vacation, and while he still had under consideration the offer of the principal of the institution, that Ned accompanied one of the resident dowagers to the city, at her special request. She had procured for him a card of invitation to the magnificent and almost regal entertainment to be given that evening, by the celebrated Mrs. R——, whose boundless wealth and ambition to vie with the most successful patronesses in either hemisphere, had made her name familiar in aristocratic circles in Europe, and secured its commemoration in the traditions of the city as effectually as had been the rich Athenian's.

Having parted with his complaisant companion at the mansion of one of her acquaintances in the west end of the city, Ned was hastening in the direction of the more humble dwelling of his legal friend, when he was accosted by his old acquaintance in Pecan alley—Tom Denny.

"Ned Lorn!" cried Tom, seizing his hand. "You don't know me? I see you have forgotten the boy who offered you his parrot one Christmas, after you escaped from your abductors."

"Tom Denny! Though it is much altered, still I can recognize your face. But your form, Tom—your——"

"My humped back! You mean that. It was straight when we last parted. It has been broken; it was an accident, a lucky accident——"

"A lucky accident, Tom!" exclaimed Ned, surveying the enormous protuberance between the young man's shoulders.

"I think so, Ned. It's well now—it don't hurt me any more. I'll tell you all about it. Let us stroll along Broad street. About four years ago, I was run over in the street, by a rich man's coach, which broke my back. I was taken into an apothecary's shop. The physician that examined me had my clothes taken off, in the presence of the gentleman whose coach had done the mischief. An old miniature found with me in the basket, supposed to be the likeness of my mother, being suspended from my neck, attracted the attention of the rich gentleman. He gazed at it eagerly, and became greatly excited. Then upon discovering a mulberry mark on my shoulder, his agitation increased. He did not explain the particular cause of his violent emotion; and all supposed it to be merely a very natural concern at my lamentable condition, after the doctor had pronounced the serious nature of the injury I had sustained. But he immediately insisted upon having me conveyed to his fine house, which was not far off, instead of being taken to the hospital as had been proposed by others. It was done. The best medical attendance was secured, and I recovered in due course of time.

"I had appointed a day upon which to leave the house. Mr. Radley, a lawyer, had informed me I might recover \$10,000 damages. He agreed to undertake the recovery of it, by the employment of some other lawyer, his own agency in the transaction to be forever a secret. He was to have one-fourth the proceeds and pay all the costs.

"Well, the day arrived upon which I had fixed for my departure. I announced my intention to Mr. Mallex——"

"Mallex! Tom, did you say Mallex?"

"I did, Ned—Mr. Job Mallex."

"Go on."

"He was much excited. He asked what I intended to do. I told him I wasn't fit for much in my crippled condition; but that, in my opinion, he ought to compensate me for the injury. He said it was an accident. I told him the lawyers said the court would give me large damages. At the name of the lawyers and the court, he foamed at the mouth, stamped and swore. I had seen rather too much of the world to be frightened at anything he could say or do; and so I merely repeated what I had said with perfect coolness. He gazed at me, probably five minutes, without uttering another word, and then burst into a fit of loud laughter. 'Tom,' said he, 'I'm resolved to defeat the lawyers for once. You see I have no family—no one to provide for but myself. And since I have ruined your prospects—spoiled your beauty—and find you a keen, sensible lad, hang me if I don't provide for you. I will adopt you, and perhaps make you my heir. You shall live with me, and have ten dollars a-week. If we fall out, and hereafter you should determine to leave me, you know you can then bring your suit, as well as now?"

"This *was* good luck. I hadn't sold newspapers all my life for nothing. I knew what a good bargain was. And so I said I would agree to the proposition, if he would put it in writing, and sign it before witnesses. He laughed, patted me on the hump, and sent for Radley. The agreement was written out, signed and deposited in the Savings Institution, where I had already some two hundred and fifty dollars.

"More than a hundred times have we fallen out since then; and as often have I threatened to leave him. But he won't let me. Ned, he never will let me go! When I get positive—because I am independent—he cools down in a minute, and agrees to everything I say. He's a tyrant to everybody else; but they say I am his master. He will abuse me, and curse me! but then he always submits in the end. Now wasn't it a lucky thing for me that he broke my back?"

"I can't agree with you, Tom," said Ned, shaking his head. "But I am glad you are so well provided for."

"Ned!" said Tom, "I always loved you, and you were always kind to me. Now, you have no idea what a gratification it would be to render you a service. Susan said she couldn't afford to have the parrot; but couldn't she afford now to let you borrow a hundred dollars of me?"

"No, no, Tom! I thank you. But I would rather starve than accept any of that man's money!"

"I understand, Ned. He's been your enemy, and is yet. I hear him and Mr. Bainton speak about you very often. I don't let on. They have no idea that I ever knew you; and I've never told 'em. But how does Susan get on?"

"As she did when you knew her. She has a few boarders and makes a living by her industry, and still keeps her old savings out at interest, for my benefit, I believe."

"Good bye," said Tom, seeing Ned was about to leave him. "I must meet with you again before you leave the city. Let us see each other to-morrow, and I'll tell you what's the matter between Mallex and Bainton. They don't agree as well as they used to. Mr. Mallex is absent a great deal; he has bought a farm near the village of —, and turned politician in the country. In the city, he is the bill-broker and stock-jobber still."

When Ned drew near the residence of his legal friend, he was somewhat surprised to meet him in company with Eugene Bainton, and apparently engaged in an earnest conversation. After greeting Persever very warmly, Ned permitted Bainton to take his reluctant hand.

"Ned," said Eugene, "I have long been a sufferer on your account. Your history, as Susan Meek and yourself related it, seems to be credited by a great many respectable people, who regard me with distrust. Thus I am bereft of happiness. Now, if you be my sister's son, you have only to establish the fact. I will not make any opposition. It is well known that I was absent—far away—when your father, or rather Mr. John Parke and my sister, died—and at the date of the physician's certificate of the death of their son. I cannot be responsible for any transactions in my absence——"

"Was I not placed in the house of refuge with your consent? Or rather, *why* was I taken thither, and confined

with a mob of juvenile offenders, the sons of dissolute and disreputable parents?"

"It was not with my consent. God knows I was innocent of all participation in that act. Why it was done, it is not for me to say."

"But, sir, do you not know that I am the son and heir of John Parke? Have you not learned from others—from your associate, perhaps—that the unresisting child he conveyed thither did not die—is still living?"

"I will admit that an old woman—a disgusting old hag who demanded money from us, declared she had placed a dying boy in the cot which had been occupied by my nephew——"

"That explains the mystery! My God! I thank you!" exclaimed Ned, throwing up his arms, and speaking in such a vehement manner as to attract the attention of persons in the street.

"Here we are, at my door," said Persever. "Come in!" They followed him.

"What was the name—what the appearance of the old woman?" continued Ned.

"A most repulsive, broad, wrinkled face; white eyebrows, and coarse grizzly hairs on her lip and chin."

"Did not her disgusting head shake continually?"

"It did."

"Then, horrible wretch as she was, and is, if she still lives, you may believe her. I remember her—I never can forget her!"

"Mr. Bainton!" said Persever, with a glow of generous enthusiasm, "you have voluntarily furnished an important link in the chain of evidence; a fact we have not hitherto known, and one we might never have obtained, although I think I have seen that same woman. Such conduct, sir, can be attributed to no other than the most honorable motive."

"And is not such evidence quite sufficient?" asked Ned.

"It is sufficient to prove you were there," said Eugene; "that you saw this woman there: but it does not prove she told the truth. I have no doubt you saw her, and that her abhorrent image is still fresh in your memory; but hundreds could say the same; and the truth of the certifi-

cate of the attending physician, Dr. Drastic, who still lives, and enjoys an unsullied reputation, cannot be overthrown by the assertion of a woman of no character, who demands money for being silent."

"Then, sir, I will bide my time. There will be other evidence of my identity. I cannot believe I am to go down to the grave, either under the imputation of being an imposter, or the victim of injustice, defrauded of my rights."

"I have never regarded you as an imposter."

"Some one did. And not only inferred it, but wrote it down, and published it!" continued Ned, in a passionate tone.

"It was not I who did it."

"You know who it was. You did not contradict it."

"Ned—no! I will not say it, now. This, however, I will say: only establish your claims, and it will be seen that the fortunes of both the Parkes have not been squandered——"

"Forbear!" said Persever, who supposed from Ned's contracted brow and quivering lip, that he was about to utter some irritating reply. "Mr. Bainton!" he continued, "I am glad we met. Let us meditate on the matter in the solemn privacy of our closets. We are all liable to error. But alas! how few of us have the noble courage to retrace our steps, or to forgive an injury. If it be divine to forgive, it is no less God-like to repair a wrong. Let us consult our consciences, and be guided by them!"

Eugene pressed the hand of Persever, and touching that of Ned, departed without making any answer.

When he had gone several minutes, Persever, who had thrown himself back in his chair and closed his eyes, started up, laughing loudly, and exclaimed: "Ned, the devil who has been working against us, is about to be overthrown at last! The Lord has taken pity on that man's soul! Ned, my boy! What will you take for your fortune? If I had Madame R——'s wealth, I would offer you \$200,000, at the very least."

"If I have character," said Ned, "the fortune might contribute to my happiness—but not without."

"Character! My dear boy, you have lost no reputation——"

"Did I ever have any, Mr. Persever."

"As much as other young men—quite as much wherever you are known. But, truly, if it were otherwise, the fortune would soon repair it—stop, now; none of your frowns! You are right. See this uncle of yours. . He has immense wealth, but is evidently miserable, because he is aware that good men regard him as the defrauder of the orphan. You know I wrote you an account of my interview with them, wherein I warned them, and threatened them. My denunciations have gone abroad in the community. They never trace the tale to its true source, and of course it is believed. But your uncle—don't shake your head—I have hopes of him—that he will purge his breast and be worthy of you yet—will make an effort to escape from the load of ignominy. Remember, Ned—while life lasts it is not too late to repent, or to repair an injury—and that all just men must forgive."

"True. Forgive; but they cannot forget."



CHAPTER XX.

MALLEX AND BAINTON DETERMINE TO DISSOLVE PARTNERSHIP.

It was night. Again the murderess, Mrs. Sutly, confronted Mallex in his own parlour. Her visit was protracted, and her language had been offensive. Mallex was weary. He had made a long speech that day in the country, in view of obtaining the nomination of his party for Congress.

"You have your money—why do you not depart?" asked Mallex.

"I'm not ready. I'll go when it suits me. I have a notion to make this fine house my home, and settle myself for life. You are a single man, and ought to marry——"

"Woman! Are you not drunk?"

"Not much. I drink my wine after dinner. Havn't I as much right to do it as you fine gentlemen?"

"Insufferable impudence!" exclaimed the stock-jobber, rising and approaching the window.

"Oh, he's there!" said the old hag, her eyes following him, while her monstrous head seemed to shake with more than its usual violence. "Dick's my shadow. Whenever you see me, you may be right sartin he's nigh abouts. And he's the patientest and silentest boy in the world; only it won't do to hurt him, or to speak brashly to him."

"I'm not looking for your infernal son Dick."

"No matter. But if you should want him to do any more of your nice jobs, he's always to be found. Dick wants money. His wife is having an awful sight of children, and none of her babies die. This is a nice house, and I like it; and you're a nice man. Why don't you get married? Why not have me?"

Mallex merely stared at her in mingled disdain and astonishment.

"You can't kill *me* with such looks as them. I ain't no poor Olivia——"

"Olivia! Woman, who—what do you mean?"

"Oh, she's dead; you needn't be frightened. I know all about her. My other darter was her maid, and carried the basket into Pecan alley."

"Was Sally your daughter?" asked Mallex, in a low, tremulous tone, sitting down, apparently subdued, beside the old woman.

"Yes, she was; but she was too much afraid of you to tell anybody but me. Don't be alarmed, honey; there's no danger——"

"Danger? I have no fears—Olivia died a natural death——"

"Yes; natural enough—a broken heart."

"It was her own fault."

"I know it, honey. She *would* be married. If she hadn't been, you would 've been kinder. But *we* must be married, too. I'm not afraid you'll break my heart. It's too old and tough."

"Ridiculous! Why will you talk such nonsense?"

"Nonsense, is it?" I tell you I must have either you

or your partner. He's the handsomest man, and hain't got bloody hands——"

"Bloody hands! Heavens!——"

"Don't mention heaven. It makes me tremble worse——"

"Bloody hands! Oh——"

Mallex threw up his arms, and walked the floor distractedly for several minutes.

"What's the use of thinking about it now? It's too late now to undo it. They may hang me—but if they do——"

"You will have me hung also?"

"We'd better be married and live together, and then there won't be so much danger."

"A hell on earth?"

"But you mustn't try your hand on me, I warn you. Our servants shan't kindle with charcoal."

"Woman, go! Leave me!"

At that moment the bell rang furiously.

"Somebody's coming. I am always afraid of the law officers, when I hear the bell. Well, I'll go now; but think of my proposition, and make up your mind by the time I see you again."

As the old hag tottered through the hall, she met Eugene Bainton. She curtsied, smiled sardonically, and shook her head at him. He rushed past, muttering an execration, and threw himself on a sofa in the parlor, with livid lips, and a passionate frown on his brow.

"You seem to be excited to-night," said Mallex. "What's the matter?"

"Job!" said Eugene, striving to appear calm, "why do you still suffer that imp of perdition to come here?"

"Suffer? ay, suffer! It is a punishment! But she comes without being invited."

"I suppose so. But why is she paid such vast sums of money? Fawner tells me that thousands are given her every year."

"You know why it is done. We jointly bear the expense, and equally share the benefits of her silence."

"I have determined to be at no further expense of this nature."

"That's abrupt," said Mallex, himself in no good humour."

"And decisive."

"I doubt it."

"You may doubt, but you will find it so. What if she should establish the legitimacy of Ned Lorn? We have quadrupled the capital we began with. We can pay Ned Lorn the amount of principal and interest that might be claimed by him as the representative of his father and uncle, and still be rich. We can then have peace and clear consciences."

"Peace and clear consciences! Ha—ha!"

"Why not? Why do you iterate my words?"

"Think of something else, Eugene. Let us never refer to that subject again."

"Impossible! I shall think of nothing else until it is adjusted. The community believe the boy is my sister's son. You and I *know* it is so. Job! I would rather be in my grave, than live thus another year. Life, henceforth, is valueless to me, unless I can be respected, and respect myself. I have committed a wrong. I repent it, and would repair it. Until that is done, there can be no happiness for me."

"Have you been to church, Eugene?"

"No matter."

"Who has been preaching to you?"

"My conscience!"

"Oho! ho—ho! Why, you make me laugh, in spite of my rage at the old hag. Conscience! You have none. Neither of us can have any. Have we not been making hundreds of thousands of dollars? Conscience! And will the world allow any rich man to have a conscience? But we may be politicians. I shall go to Congress, and afterwards, perhaps, abroad, as the representative of the government. I *will* not be troubled. Am I not already corpulent? Pshaw, Eugene! Let me tell you of a loss we have met with. You know I bought several thousands of the paper of the principal——"

"Do not name it! I know it, and do not regret it. You wished to crush the institution at Summerton, but was foiled. Let us pay this old hag no more money."

"Then she'll blab!"

"Let her do her worst!"

"No, sir!" exclaimed Mallex, furiously.

"I say yes, sir!"

"You know not what you say?"

"Enough that what I say shall be done. The next thing——"

"What, something else?"

"Yes, sir. I have considered it and decided."

"Well; what is your other decree?"

"A dissolution—and division of the assets."

"Eugene! if you knew all, you would not talk thus."

"I know enough. We can settle with Ned, separate, still be rich, and what is better, be happy."

"Be hung, you mean!"

"Hung, Job!" cried Eugene, starting up, pale and trembling.

"Yes, hung—be hanged upon the gallows."

"Explain, Job. Upon my honor I do not understand you."

"I will!" said Job, striding to the door and turning the key. Then sitting close beside his companion, he continued:

"We are murderers!"

"It is false! I am not guilty."

"But I am! And you are my accomplice!"

"No, no, no! Oh, no! I have never been guilty of that. You have often constrained me against my will to do wrong. Job! do not attempt it again. You must not think to frighten me. My mind is made up. Who has been murdered?"

"Daniel L. Parke."

"He? Merciful heaven! Oh, God, thou knowest I had no hand in it!"

"God may know it—but the jury won't. You shared the benefits—you were my partner, my companion—and hence my accomplice. The old hag did it at my request. We settled the business—the bargain—the night she was at your house. Don't you remember?"

"Yes!" said Eugene in a tone of agony.

"Well, I hired her to do it for our mutual benefit. Her wages have been paid out of our joint treasury. Do you think there is any escape for you?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"The grave!"

"And ignominy!"

"Job! would to God you had not made this revelation. but *I* am innocent!"

"You cannot escape."

"Perhaps not."

"I know it. So your best plan is to go on in the old way."

"I cannot. I shall go mad, and declare everything aloud in the street——"

"No, by heaven——"

"Job, you would oblige me, by shooting me through the head. But you cannot intimidate me again. I am the most desperate, and the most dangerous man of the two. We had better separate. We must dissolve."

"We must, if you insist on it. But it will never do to admit the claims of that boy. You might *give* him what you please—but no concessions."

"And you will manage the——"

"Old hag—yes."

"Then be it so! And if Ned's legitimacy be proven or admitted, you shall be exempted from molestation."

"That shall be stipulated. I will see Radley."

"I have seen him, and consulted with him."

"Oh, you have? Then he is yours. But our agreement was in writing. The capital was all yours. My share is a moiety of the profits. There can be no difficulty, no dispute. As you say, there will be enough for all. Perhaps we had better separate. Of course you will never divulge the manner of the old man's——"

"I might, if we remained together. Oh, Job, why did you lead me into such crooked paths."

"That's past lamenting. I suppose you will grant me a reasonable sum to be applied in satisfying the old hag's demand——"

"Not a dollar—not one cent!" cried Eugene.

"Very well. I shall have all that burthen while she lives."

"You do not intend——"

"Nonsense! You have no right to demand what I intend to do after our separation. We will settle everything at the office to-morrow. Our real estate can be valued at cost——"

"Oh, yes. I will meet you there. Farewell!"

Eugene hurried away.

Mallex threw himself down on the sofa and covered his face with his hands. He remained thus for many moments, apparently plunged in deep abstraction, and striving to shut out the light of the chandelier from his vision. He had not hitherto thought of danger. He had ever been successful. His only study had been how to rid himself of his annoyances, and how to use his great wealth so as to reap the greatest possible amount of happiness from it. But now he was a prey to painful apprehensions.

When he opened his eyes again, he beheld the pale, high-cheeked and long-chinned face of Tom Denny, who stood motionless vis-a-vis before him.

"Demon! hump-backed demon! Why are you here?" demanded Mallex, fixing his eyes upon the imperturbable visage of the dwarfed young man. "Will you not answer me, dog!" continued he, exasperated at receiving no reply. He sprang upon Tom, hurled him to the floor, and placed his knee upon his breast. "Now, sir! tell me—have you been listening to the conversation held in this room to-night?"

"I have. But I am not—cannot be your enemy."

"Enemy! You lie! They rise on every hand. Witnesses of my guilt seem to spring up every hour. They encompass me like blood-hounds, and would have my life. The very walls have eyes and hands as well as ears. I am beset by a thousand furies to-night, and shall go mad. Monkey, dog, demon! Speak, before I grind your knot of bones into powder!"

"Sir, if you see proper to kill me, you will destroy one who is not your enemy—one you might repose confidence in, and who could be of service to you."

"If you were a Hercules, and would batter to death my enemies; or even if you were an Argus, and would watch them——"

"I can watch them, sir."

"I think you might," said Mallex, relaxing his grasp, and permitting Tom to rise. "And why should I kill you? Why should you be my enemy? Tom Mallex!"

"Tom Denny, sir."

"No, sir, Tom Mallex—that is your name. You are my son. Olivia was your mother, and we were married. The old hag can prove it—but I acknowledge it."

"You do, sir?"

"I do. Witness my hand and seal!" Job sat at the table and wrote a brief statement of Tom's parentage, which he signed. "There, sir. To-morrow, if you desire it, I will sign a more formal acknowledgment. Now, sir, I do not fear you—you will not betray me."

"No, sir. I am bound to you more than to any other living mortal."

"I think so. And I should be bound to you—but—candidly, I feel no affection for you, with your ape-like face, and the knot of unshapely bones on your back. Bah! What an heir for my estate!"

"Sir, I am as you made me. If I am indebted to you for existence—which I do not doubt—I am also to regard you as the author of my deformity."

"Very true. And perhaps your shape accords well enough with my mind. You may serve me better as you are, than if you had been more attractive to the eye. Boy! you are doomed to be a by-word and a jest all your life. A thing, a monster, to frighten children, and to fill the minds of men and women with disgust. Study mischief. Be a hypocrite, or an unconscionable demagogue. Swear vengeance against all the world. Swear!"

"Pardon me; I cannot do it. No one ever injured me, but——"

"Me, I suppose. Be it so. But, sir, will you not defend, and avenge your father? The world is at enmity with me. They may seek my life!"

"I think not, sir. But if they do, I shall exert myself in your behalf."

"I believe you will—not for any love you may bear me, but for the sake of escaping the stigma of being the son of a man who was hung. You know what I allude to."

"You refer to old Mr. Parke."

"You have it. What do you think of that occurrence?"

"I would rather have died myself—than to have survived to find my father a mur——"

"*Murderer*—speak it out! So, you do not approve the act, even if you are to gain by it?"

"No, sir."

"I think I shall disinherit you! But if you overheard Bainton, you learned it was almost his intention to restore to the nephew what we had of the uncle."

"I did—and hope he will keep in that mind."

"Fool! you are my son—then why will you oppose me?"

"I will discharge my duty to you, sir. I cannot be your enemy, and must serve you. You have most to fear from Mr. Persever. He will be the first to get information from Mr. Bainton or the old woman, if either of them should conclude to inform on you. I am intimate with Ned Lorn, and am invited to visit him at Mr. Persever's house, while he stays in the city. I can become intimate with Mr. Persever himself, by a double deception which I could not justify myself in practicing, if you were not my father. He will employ me as a spy in this house, which will enable me to find out what may be passing in his."

"Bravo, Tom! I didn't think you had such wit. I am glad I have such a son! You shall have whatever amount of money you may demand. Keep your eye likewise constantly on Bainton, and the old woman, also. Tom, you have genius. Keep these people at bay, and frustrate all their hostile endeavours. I have a scheme of ambition. If I live I will be *Honourable*—perhaps, his *Excellency*. Think of your father scaling the presidential throne! You can aid me, and I will reward you."

Mallex smiled, and really seemed to look with affection, for the first time, on his son.

"But—father," said Tom, with his eyes cast downward, "if you find that the terrible act cannot be kept a secret, will you suffer them to seize you? Will you not fly?"

"Fly! whither should I go? No, boy—my son—you must be vigilant. Yet be sure and give me warning, when—that is, if they get sufficient evidence to——Pshaw! What rich man was ever punished by the laws?"

As he said this, with an equivocal smile on his pale lip, he withdrew. Tom threw himself down and wept like a child. Mallex, hearing the noise, returned and stood in the door watching him.

"You weep," said he. "You must feel for me. Let me embrace you. You are the only one in the wide world whom I may trust! Good night, my son. Put out the light, and retire to rest." Again Mallex withdrew, and his heavy tread was heard ascending the stairs. Tom, still in tears, did his parent's bidding.



CHAPTER XXI.

NED MEETS WITH ALICE—"THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE,"
ETC.

THE princely mansion of Madame R—— was in a fashionable blaze. The saloons, the halls, the conservatories, were brilliantly illuminated, and glittering with gems. Sparkling eyes vied with the costly jewels, and fair cheeks emulated the beauty and freshness of the most exquisite exotics. Fruits of every clime; delicacies of every land; wine, music; the rustling of satin, and enchanting smiles, abounded wherever one might turn.

Many hundreds of delighted mortals were assembled within the capacious walls of the princely hostess. It was a scene unequalled in the annals of American entertainments, and the memory of it is destined to be preserved in the traditions of fashionable circles in other lands as well as our own. For many nations were represented—and men who had feasted in the halls of royalty, declared that monarchs alone might hope to rival such splendour.

And Ned Lorn, with no symptoms of trepidation on his pale, composed face, and no misgiving as to the validity of his right to associate upon an equality with the proudest of those present, entered the spacious mansion with the high-bred dowager, Mrs. Sword, clasping his manly arm.

Mrs. S. was intimately acquainted with hundreds of the elite who were present on that occasion, and it seemed to be a special purpose on her part to make known the merits of her youthful gallant to as many of her friends as possible. For this Ned had not been prepared, and all his native immobility had to be brought in requisition to withstand with composure the many unexpected compliments that assailed him. He learned to his surprise that his sonnets had been copied into papers he had not seen, and were admired by the poets and poetesses generally with whom he had the pleasure of meeting that evening. It was for Mrs. S. to make known that the tall youth, with the Grecian face of pallid hue, was the Abelard, whose imagery, and the thrilling expressions of whose passion, formed the theme of commendation among the discriminating literati of the city.

Ned was ultimately relinquished to Miss B., who had evinced a disposition to become his chaperon. She was slightly his senior in years, and although she had perhaps no intention or inclination to form a matrimonial project, yet she had a passion for poets and poetry, and seemed to take pleasure in attending our hero in the rounds of the gay establishment. She repeated every poetical sentiment that had been met with in her reading, which might be suggested by the objects before them, or applied to any incident occurring in their presence. And Ned was forced to draw upon his memory for responses. This continued for more than an hour, while they moved at a gentle pace from one scene of enjoyment to another, and new ones were constantly presented to the view. And if Ned could not be regardless of the many eyes turned upon him as he moved along, having at his side the beautiful, the accomplished, the aristocratic and wealthy Miss B., still he was conscious of a hitherto ungratified desire which had never been absent from his thoughts since he first resolved to be present on that memorable occasion. It was his wish to meet with Alice. He knew she was present, for Miss B., had told him so, and had proposed to introduce him. And upon remarking that he was already acquainted with her, Miss B. had evinced some emotion of curiosity, inasmuch as she had just been expatiating on her beauty. But as yet they had not seen any of the Lonsdales.

It was when Ned was almost ready to despair, that he beheld Alice at a short distance clinging to the arm of Mr. Lonsdale, her stepfather. They were in a counter-current of promenaders, a parallel line, but separated by an intervening area in the centre of the room. Their eyes met; and Ned thought he had never beheld his divinity looking so beautiful. Her face was apparently flushed with the hue of health, and her eyes radiant with pleasure.

A brief recognition, unobserved by Miss B. and others, was all that could be accomplished in their quick exchange of glances. They passed on in opposite directions, and soon met again, in the same manner. But what a change! The rose upon the cheek of Alice had fled, and in its place was the spotless lily. So deadly pale, so anxious were her looks, that Ned was painfully startled, and so completely abstracted by his conjectures, that Miss B. was almost entirely disregarded. Alice observed his trepidation, and averted her face. But his eyes never ceased to follow her from that moment. Every obstacle was overcome in his progress, until he found himself but a few paces in her rear, and pursuing the same direction. So energetic had been his progress, that Miss B., under some pretext, supposing him to be pursuing another object, found an opportunity to withdraw, and he was left without embarrassment to direct his steps whithersoever his fancy might lead him.

With inexpressible delight he saw Mr. Lonsdale and Alice separate from the throng, and retire towards an obscure recess. There they parted; Alice turning to an ottoman, and her step-father striding towards the rooms occupied exclusively by the gentlemen.

Ned approached. Alice held out her hand, and smiled—her cheeks still as white as alabaster. The meeting was mutually kind and affectionate, as of old.

"Your mother, Alice—where is she?"

"At home. She was not quite well."

"And you—you do not seem to be in good health."

"I am quite well—but——"

"Why so pale?"

"Am I very pale?"

"Indeed you are! Tell me why it is so. You hesitated

after saying your health was quite good. Alice, tell me—tell me——” She had risen; and placing her hand on his arm, he led her through an alcove into the conservatory, where amid the blossoming shrubbery and the pendent fruit jutting over their shoulders, they were enabled to converse in low murmurs for some moments, unobserved by the many other lovers engaged in similar communications.

Ned learned that, however robust Alice might be in bodily health, she had great uneasiness of mind; and the depression of her spirits had been so complete, that nothing but the hope of meeting him, had induced her to appear at Madame R——’s magnificent entertainment. The cause of her painful anxiety was the persecution of an ill-bred nephew of Mr. Lonsdale, whose suit was encouraged by her step-father. Her mother did not have the courage to remonstrate, although she abhorred the booby as much as did her more spirited daughter. She said her step-father was so positive and peremptory in all his demands that it was impossible to avoid a compliance with his slightest wishes without giving offence. And she had been under the necessity of declining the honour tendered her, which was perhaps the wish nearest his heart. Hence the storm of indignant passion which had so much distressed her mind. But remaining firm in the position she had assumed, Mr. Lonsdale had abated his dogmatical fierceness, and adopted a conciliatory policy. He had even proposed a great “rebound” to Madame R——’s party, in honour of his step-daughter, provided she would manifest some gratitude in behalf of the hook-nosed red-haired booby, Mr. Charles Mellen!

The lovers were joined by Mrs. Sword, who was much diverted at a scene she had just witnessed. It was Mr. Lonsdale and his nephew, seeking in vain, and inquiring of everybody, for Alice. Without observing the effect of this announcement on the shivering girl, the merry dowager proceeded to mimic the mock-dignified interrogatories of the uncle, and the awkward demeanor of the nephew.

While thus engaged the uncle made his appearance, and approached the group unobserved. Stepping up behind, he disengaged the arm of Alice and drew it through his own, uttering, as he dragged her away, but without turning his head, “I beg pardon, sir.”

"At last you are restored to me!" said Mrs. S., taking Ned's arm.

Ned was stricken dumb at the rude occurrence, so unexpected, and so contrary to his wishes. He stood gazing at the receding form of Alice, and meditating a fearful retribution for Mr. Lonsdale. He was not easily moved to anger. His nature was inoffensive, and his education had been in the school of peace and good will to man. But young Love can revolutionize one's nature in a moment, and scatter to the winds the most predetermined equanimity. After a considerable pause, and during which no doubt the ebullition of his fierce passions had time to subside in a measure, the young man nevertheless gave vent to this expression:

"Cool impudence!"

"Is that meant for me?" asked Mrs. S. with a mocking smile, and pretending to make an effort to withdraw from him. He held her, however, securely, convulsively, and perhaps unconsciously.

"Oh, no! You know it was not. But you witnessed the conduct of that brute. I must see him again!"

"Ha—ha—ha! It *was* abruptly done. What did he mean?"

"That is precisely what he must answer to me. I shall demand——"

"No, no; let him alone. How can *he* know what is civil and proper? He sought his *wife's* daughter, found her, and seized her. Who can demand to that?"

"I can—and she can."

"Indeed!"

"And I will!"

"Let us join the promenade. We are too lugubrious here." Mrs. S. did not see proper to interfere in the affair. If Ned should call the capitalist to an account, it would be nothing more than one of those little interludes in the drama of existence, with which she had been made familiar during the lifetime of her husband.

It so happened that Ned once more encountered Lonsdale that night. They met in the crowd, passing quickly in different directions. But our lover had found time to whisper in the ear of the proud step-father, the very sig-

nificant words: "You will hear from me!" Lonsdale's face changed colour several times in the space of a few minutes, and his frame seemed to be the victim of an excessive agitation.

Ned was calm; always pale; but now the impersonation of deliberate resolve. Nevertheless he exerted himself successfully to be as gay and vivacious as ever during the remainder of the evening.



CHAPTER XXII.

FORTUNE FROWNS.

THE next morning at breakfast, Mr. Persever concurring, Ned decided to decline the generous proposition of the principal of the college at Summerton. He owned that in the existing state of his feelings, he must be utterly incompetent to discharge the duties of the responsible position to which his benevolent friend was anxious to promote him. And the consciousness of this fact was a source of pain and mortification, for he was aware of his great indebtedness to his reverend friend and protector. But Persever encouraged him in the hope that other means of payment would be soon afforded, and the young man, nursing the high anticipations incident to one of his years and genius, was content to rely upon the events of the future.

There was one experiment he would try, the nature of which he did not, from sheer diffidence, communicate to his legal adviser. He had, during the last year, written a romance embodying many incidents similar to those that had occurred during his own youthful career. In truth his hero very much resembled himself, and his heroine Alice. This work, he thought, when published, might mend his fortune. What author ever thought otherwise when his first work was completed?

Rising from the table, Ned retired to his room and wrote a formal note to Mr. Lonsdale. He demanded an

explanation "such as one gentleman had a right to demand of another." This he sealed, and afterwards begged Mr. Persever to do him the favor of delivering it in person. His friend readily agreed to oblige him, not doubting it was a demand of Alice in marriage, which project he was quite ready to promote. He had learned many particulars of the mutual attachment between the young lovers from Tim Trudge, who, when in the city, never failed to visit the generous young lawyer who had befriended him in his extremity.

Ned then determined to return to Summerton that day, and await the response of Mr. Lonsdale. In his half-insanity, produced by his love, his ill-treatment, his poetical temperament, and his literary aspirations, any one of which being sufficient to produce madness, he anticipated nothing less than a hostile meeting with Lonsdale. He was quite ready to appear in the field, and sometimes felt that he was perfectly willing to expire in such a cause.

But just when he was taking leave of Persever, a note was received from Eugene Bainton. The first sentence clearly indicated what had been the effect of the evil influence which Mallex still wielded over his unstable mind. He said that however much he wished to believe Ned was his nephew, upon a deliberate reconsideration of all the testimony pro and con, he was under the necessity of awaiting further developments before he could take any decided step in the business. In a postscript, however, he desired Mr. Persever to call at his office that day at noon, and to bring Ned with him. He said he felt an affection for the young man, and whether they were relatives or not, he had a disposition to serve him.

"I will not go!" said Ned, "I will write him a note, rejecting with scorn his offensive overture!"

"No, Ned!" said Mr. Persever, somewhat sternly; "that would be precipitate; it would be wrong. I say this as a friend, as well as your legal adviser."

"Pardon it, then, Mr. Persever. You are doubtless in the right. At least it would be altogether improper for me to decide in such a matter without your concurrence. I was and am somewhat under the influence of——"

"An excitement, eh? Very well. I will see him.

Rely upon it, I shall do nothing which I would not subscribe to were I in your place."

"I know it. You must forget my silly ebullition. One thing, however, I cannot submit to; I mean the acceptance of anything in charity, nor as a bribe not to prosecute."

"Nor would I, either."

"Then the whole business is in your hands. I will sanction whatever you may agree to. Farewell. I will await Mr. Lonsdale's communication at Summerton. After two days' delay for the purpose of hearing from him, I design making a brief visit to New York."

"One thing more," said Mr. Persever, still clasping his client's hand. "You may probably be applied to by other attorneys, in person or by letter, intimating their ability to serve you. Mr. Bainton is indiscreet, and, wherever he may be, is apt to throw out hints of his intentions. The lawyers are not unlike expert hounds in scenting a fox. You understand?"

"Oh yes; the whole business is in your hands, and such applications must be referred to you. If you should require their assistance, of course you will employ them."

Ned departed for the boat, with his carpet bag in his hand, and Persever proceeded to deliver the letter to Mr. Lonsdale.

At the wharf Ned encountered Mr. Radley. He had not forgotten his face or burly person, although he had not seen him since the memorable morning that Tim and himself were arraigned as prisoners before the mayor. Ned could not, in common civility, refuse the proffered hand extended towards him in full view of so many people then passing into the boat.

"You recollect me?" asked the impudent lawyer, as they stood in the companion way.

"I remember your face—it has not changed, since it made an impression on my mind. But I have changed, and I marvel that you recollect me."

"I happened to see you yesterday in company with my friends Bainton and Persever, and meeting subsequently with the former, he told me your name. What do you suppose he said it was?"

"I care not what he said it was."

"But you do! By Jupiter, he said, unconsciously, it was Edward Lorn Parke!"

"And that was true. It is a pity he has not always spoken unconsciously—it might have been better for his own name, and for his own happiness."

"Just so! Since then the whole matter in controversy between you has occupied my thoughts. You are going up?"

"To Summerton, certainly."

"I'm glad of it. I have a rich client there I am to see to-day. But in regard to this business of yours. Perhaps you are not aware that I have been familiar with most of the transactions of Bainton and Mallex for a number of years?"

"I am aware of it."

"Very well; then you must suppose that I have a knowledge of their vulnerable points."

"I cannot say that I understand your meaning. I am not sure that I know what you allude to by 'vulnerable points.'"

"The weak places where demonstrations may be successfully made. In short, I have long known that Bainton was your uncle, and that you were justly entitled to your father's estate. The difficulty was how it could be proved, or how to obtain an acknowledgment and restitution from your uncle."

"True, that is the difficulty."

"Was, you mean. It would be so no longer with *me*."

"I am glad to hear it. I believe you are his counsel; and I hope you make this communication at his instance."

"By no means! You are entirely mistaken. Everything depends upon skilful management."

"And I have relied solely on the justness of my cause, and its advocacy by my friend Mr. Persever."

"Precisely so. And you see the result. Nothing has been done. Now I will undertake to put you in possession of your fortune in less than a month, or I will charge nothing for my services, provided——"

"Provided?"

"Ay, provided my agency in the business be kept a profound and inviolable secret."

"I have no secrets in matters of business."

• "Hence you have no fortune."

"If the fortune be mine, it is justly so, and must be recovered in an open and honourable manner."

"I propose nothing that is dishonourable."

"It would be dishonourable in me to employ a new agent without the concurrence of my attorney."

"Granted. But his consent can be obtained. Indeed as I am not to be known in the transaction, he will be required to act upon my advice and information."

"Enough!"

"You accede! Give me a line to——"

"No, sir; you are mistaken. I cannot accede to any such arrangement. I doubt its propriety—I doubt the motive, sir! Mr. Persever has the entire control of the business. He may, and no doubt will, employ additional counsel, if it be necessary, and I shall sanction it. I am pledged to take no step whatever without his advice, and I have no disposition to do so."

"Pledged, eh? That was Persever's suggestion. Far-seeing dog! But, as that settles the question, of course I may rely upon your honour not to betray me. You will keep my proposition a secret?"

"I have said I disliked secrets; and I do not perceive how my honour can be involved. Perhaps I may not have occasion to refer to this conference."

"I shall rely upon you," said Radley, in a loud voice, taking leave suddenly, and going ashore at ——, about midway between the city and Summerton.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN OFFENSIVE NOTE.

• PERSEVER attributed the vacillating character of Bainton's note to the right cause. It must have been written after an interview with Mallex, whose purposes were never abandoned, and whose will was of an adamant nature.

But he doubted not, from his knowledge of Eugene's disposition, the convictions with which he was impressed, and from which there could be no escape, that his client's claims were destined to be established according to the requirements of justice at no distant day.

Actuated by these convictions, he determined to call upon Bainton after his return from the mansion of Mr. Lonsdale. It might be well to be constantly conversant with all the phases of his adversary's facile disposition.

When he was ushered into the presence of Mr. Lonsdale, he was surprised to find that gentleman labouring under a most extraordinary nervous excitement. His countenance was pale and haggard; his knees and hands unsteady, and his voice exceedingly tremulous.

The truth was that Mr. Lonsdale had not slept a wink for more than twenty-four hours; and superadded to his loss of repose, was an ever-present apprehension that he was upon the eve of being summoned to the perilous field of honour. The words of Ned had never ceased to echo in his ears from the moment they had been uttered.

It so happened that Mr. Lonsdale had been relating anecdotes the preceding evening, relative to several fatal duels, in the presence of a circle of his rich acquaintance, who could not avoid being impressed with the belief, from his tone, the interest he evinced in the subject, and the occasional chivalrous declarations he made, that he of course was one who held himself amenable to the laws of honour. Indeed he had advanced an argument in maintenance of the practice of single combats, in opposition to the opinion of non-combating gentlemen. And when the significant notice of the young man whom he had so rudely treated, recurred to him—as it did continually, in spite of his efforts to banish it from his mind—how could he escape from the chances of the arbitrament of arms, an ordeal which he had so recently and so zealously advocated? Might he not avail himself of the subterfuge, that Ned Lorn was no gentleman? No, he had been associated with the most respectable guests at the *hotel* of Madame R——, and had accompanied thither the widow of a gallant officer who had been celebrated for his duels. Could he apologize? That might be tantamount to an abandonment of the pre-

tensions of his nephew to the hand and heart of Alice. Would he fight the young man? That was a question he did not ask himself. He was determined to do no such thing. Then what was he to do? It would be absurd to attempt an escape under the plea of disparity of age; for Mr. Lonsdale was not old, and always affected the appearance of youth in his dress, his manners, his associates, and amusements. In short, it was a dilemma from which there seemed to be no means of extrication. Incessant ruminations of such painful character had naturally left their marks upon the visage of the unhappy capitalist.

After the customary salutations, Mr. Lonsdale by a violent effort succeeded in breaking the seal. The letter quivered and shook in his hand; and when he had finished perusing it, the unsteady glances of his eye, and the perspiration on his forehead, added to the other evidences of an uncontrollable perturbation, filled the young lawyer with astonishment.

"I hope, sir, there is nothing seriously annoying in Ned's letter," observed Persever.

"A—a—no—oh, no!" was the reply.

"I hope his proposition may not prove disagreeable to any party."

"Do you say so? God knows I hope it wont, Mr. Persever!"

"If it meets with your concurrence, I think no one else will oppose it."

"Of course not!"

"As his friend—as one who has known him from his boyhood, I am warranted in saying you will find him honourable, deliberate, and yet prompt to meet——"

"Eh? What? Mr. Persever! Do you not think this affair might be amicably adjusted, without a meeting?"

"Without a meeting? I must own that I do not understand you clearly."

"You certainly understand the nature of the business upon which you come to me."

"Undoubtedly. I am here as the friend of Ned Lorn, or rather of Mr. Parke."

"I know it! But I ask you in the confidence of friendship, as one gentleman may address another, if this business may not be settled on amicable terms?"

"Amicable terms! Most unquestionably, with your concurrence."

"I will concur freely, fully, and with all my heart!"

"Then the matter is settled! Neither Alice herself, nor her mother, I am quite convinced, will interpose any objections."

"Alice and her mother! What have they to do with it?"

"What have they to do with it? Alice, at all events, I should suppose, would have a good deal to do with it?"

"You think she will influence the young man?"

"Of course. She has already influenced him, else the proposal you hold in your hand had not been written."

"Proposal? My dear sir——"

"Does he not propose to marry her?"

"To marry Alice? Read it, sir—read it!"

Persever perused the note. He could restrain himself no longer. But his laughter excited no mirthful sympathy in the breast of Lonsdale.

"It is a very serious matter, sir!" said the step-father.

"You see that you have laboured under a mistake."

"I own it; and a most ridiculous and diverting one it is."

"It may be diverting to you, sir; but not to me. What sort of a reply shall I make? What shall I do?"

"Leave it to me. The young man is half demented; any other would be hopelessly insane in his circumstances. Why, sir, he must make an apology."

"He make an apology? Why, he demands one from me!"

"He is in love, and a poet; either would make him a fool. Besides, he has been ill treated by the world, and is now, I hope, upon the eve of coming into possession of a quarter of a million of dollars."

"You don't say so! Can it be possible! I will explain everything to his satisfaction. He is a fine, a noble young gentleman——"

"No, sir; at least that note was highly improper——"

"Improper, I admire him for it! Mr. Persever, tell him to forgive and forget——"

Tell him to forgive——"

"Yes, sir." It was *my* improper conduct which justly excited his displeasure. I snatched Alice away from him last night, without one word of explanation."

"Ay, Alice was mixed up with it; no wonder he was singularly incensed. Love and madness you know are nearly allied. He might demand satisfaction of his father, were he living, for an affront in the presence of his mistress."

"But still, I'm apprehensive the difficulty cannot be arranged satisfactorily to all parties," continued Lonsdale, at length becoming composed. "My nephew is in love with Alice, also."

"Aha! Then we must leave the young gentlemen to settle their own affairs."

"But Mellen won't fight."

"Fight! Why should there be any fighting? Ned, naturally, is as peaceable as a lamb. Let it rather be submitted to the decision of Alice. Let us not interfere in the matter."

"If I interfere again, may I be——"

"Don't use the word, my friend."

"I wont. But you understand me."

"Perfectly. Dismiss this nonsense of Ned's from your mind. I take the responsibility of withdrawing the challenge."

"You do? There it is! Will you not take wine?" continued Lonsdale, about to ring.

"Oh, no, it is too early. Adieu. Present my compliments to the ladies."

Persever retired to his office, smiling, but yet a little displeased at Ned for not confiding everything to him. Yet the solution was to be found in his love and madness—Alice and poetry.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LITERARY SECRETS WORTH KNOWING.

NED remained two days at Susan's cottage, correcting the manuscript of his romance, and expecting every mail to bring him Lonsdale's response to his formal demand. But no response whatever from that source was to be vouchsafed him. He received a letter from Mr. Persever, informing him that nothing had been accomplished in his business with Bainton. He stated that Ned's old friend, Tom Denny, was to wait upon him during the evening of the day upon which his letter was written, and it was probable some important information might be imparted by him. But no reference was made to Lonsdale, nor allusion to the note which had been intrusted to him.

Ned then determined to execute a project he had long been meditating, viz : to go to New York, and treat with a bookseller for the publication of his romance. He would become an avowed author, and make a fortune with his pen, while the law delayed to do him justice. So completely had this idea taken possession of his imagination, that he really experienced, at times, an indifference in regard to the realization of the splendid inheritance which had seemed to be almost within his grasp. If fame and fortune could be achieved by the magic of his pen, he concluded that Alice would necessarily follow, and be comprehended in his noble triumphs. To the common mind, such fancies as these may seem to be improbable, and even absurd. But to the initiated they will not appear to be so. Nothing could be more natural, more frequent in occurrence, and, alas ! evanescent.

Susan was Ned's only confidant in the full sense of the word. His heart was open to his early, and often his only friend and protector. If she wept with joy at his prospect of obtaining a fortune, not too confidently held out by his legal correspondent, she smiled with encouraging anticipation of his success as an author. Necessarily ignorant of the mortifications and perils of such a profession, she co-

operated most heartily with the literary aspirant, and sanctioned all his measures.

Lured by the high hopes which a consciousness of the possession of genius inspired, the enthusiastic young man departed with his manuscript for the great commercial and literary emporium. But such was his diffidence in regard to his literary pretensions, usually the accompaniment of merit, that he had not solicited letters of introduction to any of the publishers.

When he arrived in the city, he engaged board and lodging at a respectable house which had been recommended to him by one of his college acquaintances. It was in College Place, not far from the Astor House.

And now Ned walked the streets of the great city. The first day he determined to do nothing more than reconnoitre the premises of the score of publishers and booksellers enumerated in a schedule which he held in his hand. He likewise carried in his pocket a map of the city, to guard against being lost.

The first thing that struck him as being somewhat remarkable, was that every one he met seemed to be in a prodigious hurry. At first he supposed they might be hastening to a conflagration in the vicinity; but then he soon perceived others moving with the same celerity in the opposite direction, and indeed in every direction. He observed likewise that every one he met, male or female, without exception, cast a glance at him, and looked him in the face, too, as if they knew him to be a stranger, or wondered why he didn't run like the rest.

Ned resolved to pursue his own course in his own way. Taking a deliberate aim, he succeeded in crossing Broadway, near Barnum's Museum. This accomplished in safety, he smiled at the recollection of a paragraph he had seen in one of the papers, which asserted that it required talents to accomplish the feat.

While pausing on the pavement, and undetermined which course to take, amid the hum of human voices and the roar of carriages, he was thus accosted by a man in genteel dress.

"Don't you think they stole them?" This was asked by the stranger, in a sort of confidential tone.

"Stole what?"

"They must have stolen them!" continued the stranger.

"What do you allude to?" asked Ned.

"The watches," said the gentleman, pointing into a shop
ard by, where an auctioneer could be heard crying "thirty
ollars! thirty dollars!"

"Why do you think they must have been stolen?"

"Because every watch is worth a hundred dollars. I
have examined them, and I am a watch-maker. I think I
shall buy one or two of them. I see you have no watch.
You will never have a better chance."

"Sir, if I believed they were stolen, and were to buy
one, I should look upon myself as a thief!" said Ned.

The stranger stared at him a moment, and then entered
the shop.

Ned found the localities of most of the publishers on his
list. But, having left his manuscript at his lodgings, he
did not that day make known the existence of the prize
which was to fall to the lot of one of them on the morrow.
In the evening he returned to his boarding house with
wearied feet and an aching head. He had walked farther
and seen more than he had ever before done in the same
length of time.

Nevertheless, before he closed his eyes that night, he
glanced over his manuscript again with great affection, as
if he were about to part with it forever. He made no ad-
ditional alterations or corrections; for he had ceased to
find anything which he had the ability so improve. He
had, perhaps, examined every page half a dozen times.

He sallied forth the next morning with his manuscript
under his arm, and found his way without difficulty to one
of the houses he had inspected the day before, and which
was the first on his list. When he entered, he asked for
the principal partner; and was shown the way to his closet,
a retreat quite different from the fabled one, from which
there were no returning foot-prints. The grave publisher,
although surrounded by voluminous evidences of his calling,
returned the respectful salutation of the young author, and
seemed to regard him with an anxiety to have his business
stated promptly, and in the most explicit terms. It was a
moment of agony for Ned. His knees trembled, his fore-

head was moistened, and his tongue hardly dared to utter his proposition.

"You have a manuscript?" asked the publisher, after waiting some moments for his visitor to speak.

"Yes, sir," said Ned. "A romance, that I would like to have you publish."

"We have a great many of them on hand, left for examination," said the publisher, looking more gravely than ever. He did not interrogate the young man as to his experience and success in authorship, or even ask his name. He had reason to suppose that if the applicant had ever written a successful book, it would have been announced by him at once, or made known by letter. "If you see proper," he continued, "to leave your work with us, it will be read, and if approved, we can then settle the terms upon which it is to be published."

"How long, sir, do you think it will be before I shall have your decision?"

"It is somewhat uncertain. There are, I believe, some eighty novels now on hand, awaiting their turn."

"Eighty? Then it would be impossible to arrive at any conclusion in regard to mine, within a few days."

"Quite impossible. But if you leave your address, you will be informed by letter of our decision."

"It would not be convenient for me to wait any great length of time, sir. Excuse me, sir."

And when Ned bowed and turned to depart, there was a pleasant smile on the lips of the publisher. He thought it a much more agreeable way of disposing of the matter, than to be under the necessity of keeping the young man a long time in suspense, and then in all probability to be obliged to decline the publication. Such announcements he knew inflicted a sad pain, and he was glad to escape being made the involuntary instrument of a very prevalent species of torture.

As Ned retreated from the establishment, an incident in the life of Defoe occurred to him, where the author of Robinson Crusoe was seen in dejection, retiring from the bookstore of the famous Curll, with his rejected manuscript under his arm. Ned thought that if his work should become popular, it would affix an indelible reproach upon the

memory of the house from which he had just made his exit. Such is the madness of authors.

But no better success awaited him at the other houses. He applied to several firms, but effected no arrangement with any of them. At the last place he entered, he met a literary character with whose name he had been made familiar. He was an author and critic, and one who had undertaken to matriculate young authors on reasonable terms. When Ned heard his name mentioned by some one, he looked up, and perceived the eyes of Mr. Shallow Skimmer fixed upon him.

"You have a novel in manuscript, I believe?" asked Mr. Skimmer, who had heard the conversation between Ned and the bookseller.

"Yes, sir; and it seems to be fated to remain in manuscript.

"You can't tell. Let us talk the matter over, as we walk along." Mr. Skimmer took the young man's arm very familiarly, and they proceeded up the street together. Indeed he accompanied Ned all the way to his lodgings, conversing in the kindest and most unreserved manner. He declared his intention to serve him, and in return learned the young author's name, his place of residence, and present circumstances—Ned, however, omitting to mention anything of his past history or future expectations.

It was impossible for the ingenuous young man not to suppose that fortune had provided him with a powerful and valuable literary auxiliary. The name of Mr. Skimmer had long been familiar to him. He had seen him assailed in the——, and he took it for granted that he must, therefore, be a writer of very considerable abilities. He supposed that none but authors of the first order of genius were attacked by the critics—because such was the general supposition. He thought of the handsome conduct of Johnson in behalf of Goldsmith, and made no doubt that his new friend had resolved to act a clever part by him.

"And you tried the three firms at the top of the list?" asked Skimmer, when they were seated in Ned's room looking at the schedule of publishers' names.

"Yes, sir."

"*Seriatim*?"

"Yes, sir; because they stand in the order of my preference."

"You understand Latin."

"My preceptor says so."

"Well. Did the publishers read any part of your work?"

"No."

"Then how could they know anything about its merits?"

"True, they could not know."

"Let me see your book."

Ned placed it on the table before him. The great arbiter of the works of genius turned over the sheets, and consumed some twenty minutes in reading portions of several chapters, while the modest author sat some distance apart in profound silence."

"Hem! umph! I see some things to be expunged, and where something might be added. But, my young friend, I have read enough to be able to pronounce it a work of merit—a work of genius, sir."

"I am glad it meets your approbation," said Ned; "and I shall be happy to adopt your suggestions in regard to any alterations——"

"Mere phraseology—it can be done when we see the proofs. You would not like to have it printed at your own expense, would you? If you make a hit, as I think you will, it may be the best plan."

"How much do you suppose it would cost me?"

"Let me see. I suppose it will make a duodecimo volume of some two hundred and fifty pages. How many copies? Three thousand? Say three thousand, with paper covers. Some can be bound in cloth if the book takes. It would cost about \$350."

"I cannot undertake it, then," said Ned, promptly.

"Well. That is settled. We must have some one else to defray the expense, or else sell the manuscript. The difficulty is that it is your first attempt. First attempts are generally failures—mine was. The publishers do not like to run the risk. Have you written anything else? Have you not contributed something to the magazines or papers?"

Oh, yes; they have published a great many of my sonnets."

Sonnets? Tasso was a great sonneteer. I have not seen your name going the rounds of the press; perhaps you published anonymously?"

"They were signed 'Abelard.'"

"You don't say so!" cried Skimmer, springing up. "Zounds! Give me your hand. I am intoxicated with joy. Sir, our friendship shall end only with our lives! I have read your sonnets. Let it suffice that I approve them. They shine like stars in the literary firmament. They emit the true scintillations of genius. Doubt not I shall be able to dispose of your novel!"

"I am rejoiced, sir, to hear that my sonnets have merited your applause," said Ned, blushing deeply, and really delighted to learn that his verses were admired by the renowned *litterateur*. And they had been sincerely admired by him; so much so, that some of them had been inserted in a British periodical, for which he wrote, along with specimens of his own composition.

"My dear Ned!" said Shallow Skimmer, I will see you again in the morning. In the meantime I will see what can be done. Adieu."

When left to his solitary reflections, Ned found himself in such a state of literary exhilaration, that his eyes were filled with tears of joy. He blessed the hour that threw Skimmer in his way, and the propitious fates that made him his friend and adviser.

Punctual to the time appointed, the experienced author and critic knocked at Ned's door, and they met again with mutual pleasure.

"My dear friend," said Skimmer, "I have been busy since we parted—and all in relation to your affair."

"I am sorry to give you——"

"No trouble—none whatever. But the truth is—and it was always so—that the publishers are shy of first attempts. Many of them will not touch it at all; only one is willing to take the risk; and that, too, on condition that I will write and have inserted, in several journals, three or four favourable notices, which I have promised to do, provided you accept his terms."

"My dear sir, how could you make such a promise without first reading the work? It may not, as a whole production, be worthy your approbation," said Ned.

"Have I not looked into it? I've seen as much of it already as critics generally do of new works. I like the title, and that is sufficient."

"Sufficient? I supposed the reviewers always perused every line of the works submitted to their judgment."

"Reviewers? We have no reviewers except one or two circles of exclusives, who review their own books. No, my dear sir, no reviewers, but hundreds of writers of notices and puffs. And some of them are well done, and done conscientiously, while others are done at a venture. But the worst thing that can befall an author is to be passed over in silence. That is death, without a chance of resurrection. Praise me—abuse me—do anything but pass me in silence. I suppose you know how my reputation was acquired? Ridicule and denunciation! Such was my pabulum, and once I grew fat on it."

"But can a favorable notice of a poor book save it from failure?"

"Undoubtedly—often, often. Puff it, advertise it—rouse the public curiosity. Have it talked about and inquired for, and the booksellers will order it. Now, mind you, I don't pretend to say an unworthy production can always be crammed down the throats of the people. We cannot make them read a book; but we can make them buy it. Lord bless you, many of our successful books are not read at all. But what of that, so the publisher sells them? He may distribute five or ten thousand copies of a well-puffed book among the thousands of provincial booksellers; and although they may never find readers, still he will have sold so many copies, and so many editions. And I venture to say I could name some works which have become quite celebrated, that have never been read by two hundred persons. And these very works have remunerated their authors handsomely. Good notices—notoriety is everything."

"It follows, then, I suppose, as a general rule," said Ned, "that works of merit, if they do not happen to be advertised extensively, and handsomely puffed, are liable to failure?"

"Most certainly. Will gold come to the surface of the

earth without being laboured for? You may consider it a labour to write a book, and it is, as I can testify; but I can bear witness also that it is not more than half the labour."

"Yet, there must be exceptions. I have met with one writer, of whose book some twenty thousand copies have been sold, and yet he informed me it had never been advertised extensively, and never puffed at all."

"That was an exception to the rule, and a most remarkable one. I should like to know that author's name, and the name of his book."

"I am sorry I am not at liberty to tell you."

"Oh, very well. He's a lucky dog, whoever he may be. But in regard to your work. The publisher I allude to, will undertake it, upon my recommendation, on the following terms: you to pay \$10 for the proof-reader; he to defray the balance of the expense. After two thousand are sold, he will pay you five cents a copy on subsequent sales."

"How many copies will he have printed?"

"Three thousand."

"I should then have fifty dollars, provided three thousand were sold."

"Exactly. But you will have a thousand dollars if twenty-two thousand copies are sold. I assure you, upon my honour, it is not often an author, and especially a young one, has such a proposition."

"But he has not examined the work."

"No matter. He leaves that to me. And the offer is made upon condition that the book is a good one, and likely to sell."

"Fifty dollars, possibly!" said Ned, abstractedly, and mentally resolving not to become an author by profession. "Why, Mr. Skimmer, how are you literary gentlemen by profession enabled to live? It must be a successful work to yield fifty dollars. How many volumes can you produce in a year? How much money can you earn?"

"I do not derive my income from books. I would like to do it, but then I might starve in the attempt. I rely upon the magazines, the weekly issues, &c. I intend to have the \$10 for reading your proofs, if you publish. Of course you will not remain in the city, at an expense of

\$10 per week, and do it yourself. I pick up something in this manner. In all candour I must own to you, that even my vocation, which embraces an infinite variety of labours, yields but a scanty and precarious sustenance. I get some £50 per annum for letters and other contributions to the British periodicals, and that is my only reliable income. I am poor, as you see me,—witness my coat—and would do anything else for a living, but I am qualified for nothing else. It is pleasant, however, seeing one's name in the catalogue of poets and critics; and, besides, some years, as before hinted, I receive in an irregular manner, some two or three hundred dollars for notices, and miscellaneous services."

"I have overrated the profits of the profession. I supposed you, Mr. Skimmer, to be rich, and in the enjoyment of a large income, the fruits of your pen."

"And others think so, as I am led to believe from the letters I occasionally receive. But you see how it really is. I have not five dollars in my purse. It is a dreadful trade; worse than that of a samphire gatherer; and as a friend, I would advise you to adopt some other profession. But, as I have before intimated, if you persist in writing, I will do all I can to serve you."

"I will not persist in it."

"Yet this work might be disposed of. It has been written, and may as well be published. I really believe it is a clever production. If it fails, you will not be disappointed, because you will expect nothing from it. If it succeeds, you may be induced to write again. But I would await the result before I made another attempt."

"I certainly shall! And can it be possible that novelists do not receive more than fifty dollars for each of their works?"

"Generally they do not average so much, and yet some are contented, and make a shift to live."

"On fifty dollars?"

"Oh, no. You asked me a while ago how many works a single pen could produce per annum. I have seen some authors have as many as a dozen different new volumes announced at once. That would be six hundred dollars. Suppose they produce three such litters in two years, and

write forty or fifty tales besides, at ten dollars each, you see a pretty snug income is secured."

"But what man could write thirty-six volumes in two years?"

"Several authors are in the habit of doing it."

"Why, I have been twelve months writing this single book, and you see it is not a large one."

"I see; but you are not broken in——"

"Broken in! I should as soon contemplate being broken on the wheel, as to undertake to write three volumes in two months?"

"And my dear sir, the writers I allude to, look as if they *had* been broken on the wheel! But let us return to your book. I likewise saw the publisher of one of our periodicals last night. He said he would give \$50 for the manuscript, (including the copyright,) if he found it equal to my representation. If you sell to him, however, I lose my \$10——"

"I will not sell to him. There is an editor in Philadelphia who, although a stranger to me, has on several occasions spoken kindly in my behalf. He has praised my sonnets. To him I will offer my work, as a token of gratitude. But, for the trouble you have been to on my account, for your kind advice, and above all for the important information you have imparted to me, I must insist upon your acceptance of this eagle. Within an hour I shall leave the city."

"My dear sir, I will receive it, as a loan, to be repaid when convenient. If it should ever be convenient it *will* be paid back. I suppose you will not collect your sonnets?"

"Oh, no; they were not written either for profit or reputation."

"But they should not be lost, for some of them are admirable. I shall collect my fugitive pieces some day, and yours might be included in the volume, if it were not for the question of copyright."

"You may have mine, if you will accept them."

"Thank you, thank you. And now, adieu, since I see you are determined to leave us. But let me hear from you. We must correspond. When your story appears in Philadelphia, I will give it a generous, no—a grateful no—

tice, and send you the paper containing it. And remember if it makes a hit, you will have the copyright still, and then some publisher may offer advantageous terms. I will see what can be done in that way here, if the Philadelphia publishers are backward. Farewell! God bless you?" And after wringing Ned's hand very heartily, Mr. Shallow Skimmer descended to the street, a richer man, poor fellow! than when he entered the house.

CHAPTER XXV.

NED'S EBULLITION OF PASSION—A NEW ACQUAINTANCE— A LETTER.

IN an hour Ned was across the river, and in three or four more he was in Summerton. He entered Susan's cottage with rather a dejected countenance.

"Well, Ned," said Susan, "I hope you have succeeded according to your utmost wishes. I have been imagining great things for you, and had become confident that fame and fortune would reward your genius and labours, when the wise and good president of the college came in and almost frightened me with the picture he drew of a life of authorship."

"What sort of a picture did he draw, Susan? He is an author himself, and an able one, too."

"He said it was a miserable pursuit. That an author might succeed in entertaining and enlightening the world, but was rarely compensated for his labour. That it was a lottery; a thousand blanks to one prize. That thousands would pay fifty cents to hear the old jokes of a clown repeated in the ring, during an hour's performance, while twenty, or perhaps ten only, would pay the same amount for a book that would amuse them for many days. And he said, moreover, that any foreign vocalist of merit was more praised by the press, and more respected by the people, than a native author of genius; and that our citizens will

bestow more money on the former during a single evening, than the latter can expect to receive during his whole life."

"Rather an awful sketch, Susan, and no doubt a true one. I accomplished nothing in New York, and have brought back my poor manuscript, which I have toiled over for so many months. Once I felt an inclination rising within me to burn it; but I resisted it for three reasons. I was fearful it might set the chimney on fire; next, I really felt an affection for some of the creations of my imagination; and disliked the idea of destroying them forever; and finally, I thought it might be acceptable to the editor of the ———, who, you know, has spoken a friendly word for my sonnets. If it should be suitable for his columns, and contribute to his prosperity, I would be happy thus to evince my gratitude for his unsolicited kindness. And why not be acceptable, Susan? Do not other publishers offer premiums for such productions? I say *such* productions, Susan. Yes, to you, who have read it, and approved it, I may say so. I have read many of their prize tales, and I am sure mine will compare very well with some of them. And why should it not? I have education, which some of the writers have not. I have done nothing but read all my life. I have studied every model that ever was admired, in ancient and modern times, both in poetry and prose. And I have felt as deeply the vicissitudes of life as any one. Why, why should I not be qualified to write as well as others?"

"You will be, Ned, when you are older."

"Older! True, I want age. But it will come, Susan. Yes, it will come. It seems to me that the anxieties I feel, the disappointments I meet with, the wrongs I have endured, and the uncertainties of the future, will make me old before my time. But they say that the spirit never grows old. My God, Susan!——"

"Oh, Ned! What moves you so?" cried Susan, in alarm, as she beheld the young man striding rapidly to and fro across the room with arms uplifted, and his eyes glittering with excitement.

The *spirit*, Susan. Fear it not. I can control it. But it exists. It is here within my breast. It has slumbered

long, and may be doomed to slumber yet a little longer. But God endowed me with it for some purpose. It has gigantic powers, and some day they must be exerted—but for good, Susan, not for evil. You and the good president have extracted the venom, and I shall never cease to thank you both. For had you not done so, I might have been possessed of a demon to tear mankind. But now my spirit is obedient to my will—to my reason—to my principles ***"I will walk out in the fresh air." Saying this the young poet-lover abruptly left the cottage and strolled along the margin of the river, followed by the eyes of his friend and protector.

He trod again the peaceful paths familiar to his youth. Incidents of former years flitted across his memory. There he had his adventure with the vicious butcher's boy, who was now in the penitentiary. That was a lesson. Here he had triumphed over his classmates, in feats of agility, as he had done in efforts of intellect within the walls of the college. And then he paused beneath the branches of the tree where Alice had so often been his companion. How cheerless now! The leaves were tossing in commotion, and the wind was howling dirge-like around him. And why should he be standing there alone, lamenting the absence of the one he loved, the one who loved him in turn? Had she not confessed it within the last few days? Why not have her at his side again? But he was an outcast and a beggar! He, who was born to inherit an ample fortune! Such thoughts, such recollections as these, almost distracted him. He stood pale and motionless as marble, his eyes raised to heaven, while burning thoughts traversed his mind, like the pronged lightning darting through a sullen cloud in the west. He held the mad spirit chained within him. The evil tempter strove in vain to loose it.

He then strode to and fro along the green bank of the river during the subsidence of his paroxysm of passion. The dark cloud had reached the zenith, and now thundered overhead. He bared his throbbing temples to the cooling breeze, unheeding the light shower which followed it. The glittering lightning that flashed along the heavens, and the deep-toned thunder pealing through the sky, seemed to have a tranquilizing effect upon his spirit. His quick fancy

contrasted the angry elements in violent commotion with the futile turbulence of impotent man; and a sense of humiliation and shame succeeded the tempest that had raged in his breast. Of what avail would be angry discontent? What could be accomplished by violence? They could not change the circumstances of which he had so long been the victim, nor merit an increase of sympathy or affection in the bosom of Alice. Such were the rational thoughts which succeeded his ebullition of passion.

At length, grown quite calm, though pale, and with a sense of exhaustion, he sat down upon the root of a large willow tree, whose clustering branches afforded an effectual shelter from the passing shower. For a few moments he covered his face with his hands, and meditated mournfully upon the sad vicissitudes of his life. Tears trickled down between his fingers. Completely humbled, he at last petitioned the only Power whence relief and comfort, under the most hopeless of calamities, might proceed. He repeated a prayer which Susan had composed for him, when he was but a small lad, and he felt a species of relief. In the darkest hour of misfortune, and when it seemed that no glimmering ray of earthly hope was ever destined to penetrate the gloom that encompassed his existence, that little prayer, simple in phraseology and humble in spirit, had always soothed his aching heart. If the great and good Being to whom it was addressed, did not respond in hopeful terms, as regards the desirable objects of this life, there never failed to be imparted to the poor boy a comforting sensation, which at least made him cheerful, and still kept at bay the grim monster—despair.

And now, when he raised his head and gazed forth upon the landscape, a great change greeted his vision, and a placid smile sported on his lip. The dark cloud had been rent asunder and dispersed by the wind, and all was bright and calm again. Transparent rain drops hung from the leaves and sparkled in the sun. The fishes leaped from the water in their diversions, and the birds sang merrily.

For a long time Ned enjoyed in silence the inspiring influence of the scene; and in his meditations upon the future, it occurred to him that the dark vapour of mystery and wrong which had so long enveloped him, might like-

wise be providentially removed, and be finally succeeded by years of prosperity and happiness, as the storm had been succeeded by sunshine.

When the sun had descended to the verge of the horizon, and the birds had ceased their tuneful lays, Ned drew forth a flute from his pocket, an instrument he was in the habit of amusing himself with in his solitary rambles, and warbled several plaintive airs. Once or twice during his pauses, he thought he heard something resembling a low breathed sigh behind him. He sat with his face towards the river, and reclined against the trunk of the tree. No one could be seen on either side, and supposing it might have been merely a groundless fancy, he did not cast his eyes in any other direction. But when he replaced the flute in his pocket, and rose upon his feet, the sigh was repeated very distinctly, and he beheld, standing a few paces in the rear, his arms folded on his breast, a tall, pale youth, whom he had seen several times recently at church, but had not learned his name, nor where he sojourned. He had been much interested by the sad expression of the beautiful features of the young man, and had enquired of several of his acquaintances if they knew him, or knew anything in relation to him. He had been answered by all in the negative. Subsequently he had been interrogated himself on the same subject by several young ladies with whom he was on terms of intimacy, and he was chagrined at being unable to afford them any information.

"I hope you will not be displeased with me," said the stranger youth, "for being a listener to the exquisite music which proceeded from your instrument."

"Not at all," said Ned, with the utmost frankness. "Only I trust you do not mean to flatter me by terming my simple tunes 'exquisite music.'"

"I never mean to flatter any one. I am always candid. Your execution might not, for what I know to the contrary, have pleased a more cultivated ear; but to my simple taste, it *was* exquisite."

"Such tunes, I believe," continued Ned, "are not often practiced by the professors. They were taught me by no master. Indeed, I doubt if they would be held in any estimation by the musical parties of the present day. I

practice them because they please myself. They soothe my spirit when it has been troubled, and seem to touch the heart more readily than the prevailing fashionable airs."

"It is the same in poetry," replied the stranger, his dark eyes flashing with enthusiasm. "He who writes that which the most readily touches his own heart, and which affords himself the greatest delight, adopts the surest plan of reaching the hearts of others, and is almost certain to have his execution considered 'exquisite' by sympathizing readers. Nature has endowed most of the human family with capabilities to appreciate all that is pleasant to the eye, the ear, and the heart."

"And," said Ned, catching the enthusiasm, "that which so much absorbs the attention and commands the admiration of many of the fashionable teachers, critics and connoisseurs, is not nature, and hence is not comprehended or appreciated by the uninitiated millions."

"Therefore but few really enjoy such productions, although it might be hazardous for any one to avow so much in the saloons. But they do not last like the old heartfelt airs I have just heard. Nor will the classic poetry of Addison and Johnson be so often read or so fully enjoyed as the simple untutored numbers of Burns."

"True, true, sir; I agree with you entirely. And I should like to make your acquaintance. I have seen you several times, but never learned your name. Mine is——"

"I know it. I likewise know something of your history," replied the stranger.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. The little I have learned in relation to you has made me anxious to be numbered among your friends. My name is Montague, Charles Montague. I, too, have lived without fortune. If I have had no enemies, I have not had many friends. I earn the small pittance upon which I subsist, with my pen. I have no relatives near; and hence I have taken lodgings at yonder humble farmhouse, inhabited by a poor widow, Mrs. Kale. My health was not good, and the physician advised me to abandon the garret in the city, and take up my abode in the country. I have selected this place because of its beauty, its

quietude, and its church. So much of my history for the present. If we should become more intimately acquainted, as I hope we will, I may be more particular in my confessions."

"We *must* be friends!" said Ned, grasping the young man's hand. "Ever since I first beheld your face I have not ceased to desire to know you; and I feel already as if we were old acquaintances. There is nothing in my history or my heart I would not confide to you; and I hope you will ever be as unreserved with me."

"I will strive to merit your esteem. Oh! it cannot fail to be a source of rare enjoyment, mutual, I hope, but certainly to me, to have one of my own age, of my own tastes, and perhaps of similar impulses and aspirations, with whom I may converse in the unrestrained language which only sympathizing hearts may employ, and which alone can express one's feelings, one's sentiments and hopes."

"True, Charles!" said Ned, still holding his new friend by the hand. "There are a thousand things, hitherto suppressed, I would have gladly spoken, and which to have uttered would have made me very happy, if I had met with such a friend before. And now, may I not ask who it was imparted to you the information you have in relation to my history?"

"Oh, yes. And were it not that the shades of evening have imperceptibly enveloped us, the name I am about to mention, if I mistake not, would reveal to my vision symptoms in your face of not unpleasant emotions. It was related to me by Miss Alice Dimple."

"Indeed! You are acquainted with her, then?"

"Not intimately. It so happened that I was in the habit of spending a few hours each day for a few weeks with Mr. Lonsdale in his library. My visits, I might say, were of a business character. His eyes were temporarily affected, and I was employed to read the papers for him. But I had frequent conversations with Mrs. L., and was several times detained till after dinner. Thus, without any formal introduction I became acquainted with Alice; and during the conversation at the table, she related what I know concerning you. But I made a discovery one day,

in relation to her, which I am sure must still be quite unknown to her step-father, and perhaps even to her mother."

"I cannot imagine what that was," said Ned, with interest.

"It was an ingenious device in her flower-bed. I should not have perceived it if I had not seen her smile several times when walking along and regarding the border of flowers. They had been planted by her own fair hand, and so drilled as to form certain letters of the alphabet in the midst of other prettily fantastic shapes——"

"Charles!" cried Ned, "What letters did you find there?"

"E. L. P."

"You make me very happy! But—but I am fearful that with the flowers the name may fade in her remembrance. Yet she *does* think of me! Montague, did you ever love?"

"I fear so."

"Fear?"

"Yes. I fear I have received one of Cupid's darts since I have been sojourning in this neighbourhood. Oh, yes—I *fear* it. Hopeless love! what is it but misery? But I will not hope, and shall not be disappointed. I may, however, worship her—in the sense not forbidden—as a star that sheds its brightness upon all, but adored by me more than the rest. She may not know it—she shall not hear my voice—for I will only gaze at a distance——"

"But suppose some favoured one should win her heart and hand?"

"That would break the spell indeed. And it might likewise occur if I presumed to disclose my humble passion. Oh, she is beyond my attainment—so I shall regard her—like the most brilliant star in the firmament."

"Who is she, Charles? You know the image I bow to, and you may safely confide in me."

"She is rich and beautiful, accomplished and good, joyful, but sympathizing and charitable. She has often conferred benefits on the poor widow, and indeed has a smile for every unhappy child of mortality. Her eyes are like the pure blue of heaven, her brow as fair as the alabaster portals of the blessed——"

"Enough; I know her. She sits on the left of the aisle some half a dozen pews from the altar. I have seen your eyes wander thither. Well, let me tell you that the fair Elgiva has inquired of me if I knew anything in relation to the pale young stranger; had heard his name; could tell his occupation, and so forth."

"Is it possible? But what boots it? Perhaps I should not have known this. It may cause too bright a dream to-night for the leaden reality of to-morrow! But let us seek our homes. I hear some one calling your name. Farewell, Ned. Let us meet as often as possible."

"Oh, yes. Let us be as brothers, and know no ceremony in our intercourse. Good night."

They parted, as old friends. Companions in adversity, their hearts were perfectly congenial. Mutually the meeting was regarded as a happy occurrence, and each determined to do all in his power to merit the esteem of his new-found friend.

"Ned! Ned! Where are you? Oh, Ned!" cried Tim Trudge, running with all his might along the river bank, and calling for our hero at every leap.

"Here I am, Tim," said Ned, meeting him. "What is the matter, Tim? Why do you cry after me in this manner?"

"Susan was oneasy, and told me to hunt for you. And I was a little flustered too, when she told me you was so pale and stared so hard when you walked out."

"And was that all?"

"Oh no. Here's a letter from Mr. Perseverance. I was down to the city selling wegitables, and came up on the Nopoly boat, dang it!"

"What can he be writing about, think you, Tim;" said Ned, taking the letter.

"Bless you, how can I tell? If it was ever so light I couldn't spell out a lawyer's scratches!"

"True, we'll return to the house and see. I hope you did well with your vegetables, Tim?"

"Not so very well, and particular with the shangys. The butter brought only a quarter at the Girard, and the other truck I sold in a lump to the hucksters."

"Indeed! I supposed you had one regular customer, who——"

"So I had. But things are always changing. I don't guess what's the matter. Mrs. Lonsdale seemed flurried, and Mr. Lonsdale said they were going to travel, and be away some weeks, maybe months."

"And, Tim——"

"Oh yes, I saw her, I winked, and blinked, all for nothing. Miss Alice never spoke a word. She only came into the hall and stood a single moment."

"And said nothing?"

"Not a solitary word. But her lips were wery pale, and I saw, jest as plainly as I see the face of that moon coming up over there——"

"What?"

"A great big tear jump out of her eye and roll down her cheek!"

"Is it possible! That might express more than words——"

"Indeed it mought so. It mought say, as it were, 'Oh, I am moughty sorry for something or other'—and it would be sure to be the truth. Often when the tongue says 'I'm so sorry,' it tells a pine-blank lie."

"True, Tim! But here we are. Come in and hear what the letter is about before you go home."

They entered, and Ned hastened to break the seal, while Susan and Tim stood at a distance, hoping to hear some good news. It ran thus:

"My dear Ned—I was pained to learn the nature of your note to Mr. Lonsdale. If I had been acquainted with the character of its contents, I should not have been the bearer of it. It was, however, a mere indiscretion on your part, superinduced by provocations sufficient to have tempted almost any young man to commit a far greater extravagance. I have seen and conversed with Lonsdale, and have undertaken to say that the matter will not be referred to again on your part. Indeed I have withdrawn the offensive note, and doubt not the act will be sanctioned by you, since you have had ample time to meditate deliberately on the subject.

"I am sorry to say that your affairs, as regards the estates of your father and uncle, do not seem to make

much progress towards a happy consummation. Mallex has contrived by some means to regain his influence over the weaker mind of Bainton. There had been a rupture between them, and a dissolution certainly ensued. But I learn they subsequently became reconciled, and united their affairs again. Bainton is now silent on the subject about which he was recently disposed to be so very communicative; and Mallex, the prime author, I suspect, of all the crimes they have committed, bids us defiance, and even proposes to go farther still. He shall be met! Come down to-morrow; I may require your services.

“Yours, faithfully, to the end,

“CH. PERSEVER.”

Dropping the letter on the table, Ned remained for many minutes the mute victim of painful conjecture. The silence of Alice, when Tim was present, and when she knew he would faithfully report every expression of tongue or feature, as he had been in the habit of doing with her cordial sanction—the turn of Bainton—the hostility of Mallex—all these clearly indicated that a change had truly occurred in his prospects. It was in vain he sought an elucidation of the mystery in his own mind; and although he was conscious of a presentiment of new troubles and prolonged misery, yet there was one subject his thoughts reverted to with delight—the congeniality of his new friend, Montague. It would at least be a consolation to relate his grievances to one who would truly sympathize with him; and whatever might happen, he felt a conviction amounting to certainty, that nothing in his conduct or destiny would ever be likely to estrange their uncontaminated hearts.

“If anything wery terrible should ever happen, Susan,” said poor Tim, quite loud enough to be heard by Ned, “I’m glad I’ve made money. The farm has paid first rate. Two dollars for turkies; one and a quarter a pair for chickens; fifteen dollars for calves, which are Betty’s—Betty does the milking—Oh, Mr. Ned,” he continued, seeing a faint smile on Ned’s lip, “I mean to take you to see Betty’s calves—they are the fattest and the largest in the country, for their age. Well—potatoes are a dollar—wheat two dollars,

and corn eighty-eight cents. We farmers are in clover, and yet everybody is abusing the Emperor of Russia. If he hadn't attacked the Turkies, everything would 've been as it was. And as I was saying, Betty and me have plenty of house room and enough of everything to eat for at least two more grown up folks."

"Thank you, Tim," said Susan. "But you need not be uneasy on our account. We do not spend more than our income. Ned will not suffer for food or clothes, even if he never recovers a particle of his fortune."

"My dear friends," said Ned, "I understand you both, God will not permit such generosity to go unrewarded. You suppose I have bad news. It is not cheering. But nothing is decided. I will go to the city to-morrow, as Mr. Persever desires, and may then learn something more definite. I shall not, however, make any calculations in future upon receiving the fortune so unjustly held from me. If it comes to me, well; if not, I must not repine. Good night."

Ned retired to his room, and wrote a brief note of explanation and apology to Mr. Lonsdale, and despatched it by the cars that evening. He had been grievously mortified at his precipitate conduct upon reading the remarks of Mr. Persever, and hastened to atone for his imprudence at the expense of an acknowledgment of his error.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AMBITION AND ITS ACCOMPANIMENTS.

IMMEDIATELY after the last described interview between Mallex and Bainton, a dissolution of partnership had been consummated. But before a fortnight had elapsed subsequently to that event, a new connexion was agreed upon, articles were signed, and the reconciled parties were partners again under the style of bankers and note-brokers

Mallex was a desperate and dangerous man, as Bainton

was well aware. The latter was unstable, fearful, and at times a prey to remorse; and a perfect knowledge of his facile character induced the former to make the attempt at reunion. It was successful. And then it was not difficult for Mallex, with his really strong mind, to convince his partner that there could not possibly be any safety for them unless they disavowed the existence of a legitimate heir of the Parkes, and employed all means in their power to suppress or destroy every species of evidence which might be employed by Persever against them. As to the manner in which the elder Parke had been put out of the way, Mallex, the hardened villain! did not hesitate to assume the entire responsibility of the act. And he consoled his more conscientious associate in iniquity with the argument that, although the law would adjudge them equally guilty, yet as Bainton was not privy to the crime, had not previously sanctioned the measure, nor approved it afterwards, he could not be morally responsible for any portion of it, nor culpable in the eyes of God! He did not hesitate, knowing the character of the one to whom he was speaking, to use the name of his maker, and to take it vain.

Then followed wine, and such other luxuries as the reckless man well knew how to employ. Much hilarity characterized the occasion. Radley, hitherto never fully trusted with the secrets of the partners who had so often employed him; Tom Denny, although informed of everything, yet bound to the most guilty one by a tie which it was impossible to sever; Fawner, the old emaciated clerk—once an affluent merchant, then a bankrupt, subsequently secretary to an insurance company which failed, and then almost a beggar, when taken into the employ of the brokers—was too happy to be permitted to earn his bread, and too grateful to those who fed him, ever to see or hear anything to their prejudice; and the two or three other clerks belonging to the establishment, were present at the entertainment, and contributed to the satisfaction of the heads of the house, by their hearty, and somewhat boisterous congratulations. Both Mallex and Bainton, when pointedly complimented by their employees, even condescended to rise and make short speeches. And it was on this occasion that Mallex announced that the good people

of the —— district, where he had property and voted, had given him an intimation of their purpose to elect him as their representative in Congress. He declared he had private information, upon which he could rely, that after one or two slight impediments were removed, there would be no difficulty in getting the nomination. After that, his election would follow of course. The impediments he referred to might be removed, partly by his own action, and partly by the services of a friend, and such a friend he doubted not was then present.

At this announcement there was a spontaneous offer of services; it was unanimous, being even participated in by poor old Fawner, whose pale, wrinkled face was illuminated by several parallel streaks of red, produced by a superabundance of wine.

"Thou art the man!" said Mallex, placing his hand familiarly on the shoulder of his aged dependent, when the party were in the act of separation.

"I should be very happy—very happy indeed, to be able to serve you, sir," responded the flattered and delighted old man.

"Remain with me, and we will confer on the subject."

The obedient servitor sat down obsequiously on the sofa that was pointed out to him, where he remained in silence until the rest of the guests had departed.

"Mr. Fawner," said Mallex, striding slowly to and fro in front of his attentive clerk, "my determination to go to Congress I suppose meets your approbation?"

"My approbation? Certainly, sir! I should be proud to see the respected head of the house which employs my humble talents, elevated to so dignified a position."

"The position, my friend," remarked the sleek bill-broker, "is not generally considered one of dignity. Men alike destitute of talents and principle often find access to that body."

"Very true, sir—very true," responded the serious old clerk, placing his hand piously on his breast; "and therefore there is a greater necessity for selecting men of character and mind to represent us. Without we have such men to conduct the government, the good Providence which made us a free people, must sooner or later destroy

our prosperity !" Fawner was an exemplary member of a religious denomination.

"True enough, Fawner. Such a catastrophe is to be feared, unless a speedy reformation takes place. But how is it to be accomplished? You see the best men, the pious men, men of the greatest talents, and highest standing in the community, are almost invariably neglected. And who are the chosen ones? Those who labour for the nomination by all sorts of intrigues and inducements. It would be utterly impossible for me to be elected if I did not proceed by indirection, and likewise by direct solicitations. I must follow the beaten path of the demagogues, Fawner, or I shall never be a Congressman. Now I want your candid opinion, whether or not I will be justifiable in using such means to obtain a seat in the national legislature, when it is my firm determination, once there, to labour for the reforms we both so ardently desire?"

"I—I have no doubt of it, sir! It is the only way to get in; and as you say, good men can never be there, unless they go in that way. The motive is everything, sir—and I'll answer for it yours is altogether unobjectionable."

"I hope so, Fawner; I think so; and once there it shall be my study how to make my acts demonstrative of it. But let us get there first. Although perhaps not two hundred of the voters in the district where I have sojourned for several years are personally known to me, yet I have, I think, secured a majority of the nominating committee. I will conceal nothing from you. It was done in this manner. By a little management, some expense, and liberal promises, I obtained the favour of most of the tavern-keepers. Do not be startled—I know you are 'a prohibitory man,' except on occasions of commendable rejoicing—for the end I had in view you know was a good one. These tavern-keepers for many years have made the representatives. Perhaps my work is already consummated. I hope so. But it may be well to put it beyond all contingency, and you are the man to help me do it."

"I? I'll do all I can! Only tell me how to act, sir!" said Fawner, throwing up his spindling arms with unwonted animation.

"I thought I could count on you, Fawner!" said Mallex, pausing abruptly, and sitting down beside the old man. "A little address, a little activity on the part of a friend, will accomplish the business. It is true I am your junior, but not so active—not so agile—for I am getting to be corpulent——"

"Sir, I've often heard people say you looked like a member of Congress."

"Have you? But to the point. There is one inn-keeper in the district, with whom, of course, I have no personal acquaintance, but whom my friends tell me is an influential, stubborn, impracticable man. We are afraid to offer him money, lest he might expose us, and blow us sky high; and I am told there is but one individual living who has a controlling influence over him—his wife."

"His wife?"

"Yes, his wife. She rules him with a rod of iron. When she decides, he is all submission."

"Are there any children?"

"You are a genius, Fawner! You have caught the idea instinctively! They have two children, a boy and a girl; and I am told they are ill-bred ugly brats; yet it is said their mother believes them to be prodigies of beauty and talent. You have a knack of captivating the hearts of children. Childless yourself, it has been observed that you have an affection for other's people's children."

"I have a weakness that way, I confess; and if the little girl should only smile on me once, I'll engage that she will not be frightened at me afterwards." The secret of Fawner's efforts to please the children grew out of the ill-impression he generally made on them at first sight, which mortified him, and hence his efforts to ingratiate himself in their affections.

"Very well," said Mallex, rising. "I'll undertake the boy. We will drive out to the village to-morrow. We shall not disclose our names until we have won the children. Be ready early in the morning. Stay," he continued, seeing his newly won electioneering colleague about to withdraw, and fearing that if suffered to depart something might occur to extinguish his zeal, "suppose you remain here all night. Tom and I are the only oc-

cupants. The boy will see that you have everything needful for your comfort."

Fawner, of course, made no objection. Tom was called, and conducted the humble guest to his chamber.

"My son," said Fawner, after looking carefully (all aged persons do everything carefully) about the room, "can you conveniently procure me a bible?"

"A what?"

"A bible. I always read a chapter before I lie down."

"No, sir. I'm sorry to say it."

"Ah me! There is one in the counting-house, and I supposed Mr. Mallex was never without one in his dwelling. Perhaps he has taken it out to his country-house. He is a good man, Tom. Reverence him. Good night."

Tom withdrew without moving his lips. But there were secret whisperings within. And the strict professor, as he lay awake on the downy couch, could not blind himself to a consciousness of internal monitions that he had consented to play a part in the political game which, if it were not absolutely sinful, could be nothing less than derogatory to one of his years and habits. But was it not a duty he owed his patron and protector? That was it! The rich man fed him. Wealth was all-powerful. How hard is it for the strictest of the pharisees to resist the slightest importunities of a rich man!

And Mallex, when left alone, surveyed his herculean form, for he seemed to fatten on villainy, in a large mirror. He stood many moments regarding his lineaments in silence, and then gave vent to a burst of satanic laughter.

"I will commit to memory some twenty texts," said he, "from the bible; and then I may pass for a very gentlemanly pious member of Congress, provided I get the nomination. A few days will tell the story. After that I shall have use for the scripture, unless the law-dog Persever crosses my path. He should have died in the prairies. If he balks me now, let him beware!" Saying this the banker strode into his chamber, uttering a low snake-like hiss, and brandishing his clenched fists.

Neither the chagrins nor the meditated vengeance of the rich man had as yet the power to rob him of his rest. On the contrary, his anticipated triumphs, by whatever

means to be consummated, afforded him unquestionable delight. If at every step in crime one were sensible to the whispers of a violated conscience, or the excruciating goadings of terrible apprehensions, a large portion of the bad men of the world would be likely to abandon their iniquitous operations. It is most generally when they can accomplish nothing more of evil, that they are visited by the anguish of remorse.

Early the next day Mallex and Fawner were driven across the country embraced within the limits of the —th congressional district. The horses were whipped into a great speed, which was continued in a circuitous course, sometimes in an eccentric line, and always apparently without any fixed destination, until they manifested decided symptoms of weariness, when the coachman was directed to proceed to the "Red Lobster," the inn kept by Jerry Snyder, the impracticable committee man. Here Mallex and Fawner alighted, and proceeded to the tap-room. Not finding the host within, they entered the room beyond, which they understood was not unfrequently made to answer the triple purpose of parlour, dining-room, and chamber.

There they had the fortune to meet with Mrs. Snyder, who, happening to be apparelled in a new dress, and having triumphed that morning in some disagreement with her husband, bestowed upon them a very polite reception.

"Take seats, gentlemen," said she. "Take that, sir," she continued, addressing Mallex, and pointing to an old arm-chair mounted on rockers, which she had just risen from. "I don't intend to set in it myself. It's at your service."

"If it must be so," said Mallex, taking the chair, "and it is your intention, madam, to go about your house affairs, perhaps you would be so obliging as to have breakfast prepared for us. We have ridden far, and have keen appetites. We were told that the 'Red Lobster' was famous for its comforts, and we rejoice that we have been able to reach it thus early."

"Oh, sir, it'll be obleeing me. It's our business. You shall have the best! Yes—the people ginerally say we keep a good house, and I hope we deserve it. Is there anything special, you'd have?"

"We'll leave it entirely to your discretion, madam. And we are the sort of travellers, which I believe are not very abundant, who happen to care nothing for the expense."

"That's true as gospel, sir. They aint as plenty as blackberries."

"If you could accommodate us with some fresh, rich milk, madam!" said poor Fawner, who really did not feign hunger.

"Plenty of it, sir. We never skim the milk that's drunk."

"And if you should happen to have a lobster——"

"We make it a pint to keep 'em ever since our sign was put up. I'll git you a first rate breakfast, never fear. You'll excuse me, gentlemen, if I must leave you alone a short time——"

"Oh, certainly!" said Mallex. "I believe your good husband is not at home?"

"No, sir, he's gone to the city, as I think, on a fool's errand."

"Ah, indeed! Something in relation to politics, I suppose?"

"You've hit it. He favours Prattle's nomination, without ever having the first chat with Mallex. He says he's heard some hard things whispered agin Mallex, such as being proud, and having wronged some poor boy out of his fortin. If it's true, he must be a beast. But say he is, I should like to know if any of the candidates is ever much better? I told him to go on, and see what he could larn, but to be sure and git my opinion before he decided."

"And that was both skilful and prudent in you. I hope he will hear your opinion."

"Hear it? Well, if he don't it'll be a wonder? Yes, and be governed by it, too. Let him tell me all he hears that lawyer say, and then I'll have my say."

"Lawyer? Did you say lawyer, madam?"

"Yes, sir. He's gone to see a Mr. Persevere, a lawyer, and a inemy of Mr. Mallex. But I'm-keeping you from your breakfasts. I'll hurry it. You look pale and hungry."

"Thank you, madam," said Mallex, striving to suppress

his emotion. "But could you not prevail on the two pretty children we saw in the porch to come in and amuse us while you are absent? We are particularly fond of nice well-bred, intelligent children, such as those we saw on the porch. Excuse me. Are they yours, madam?"

"Yes, sir. I'm obleeged for your compliments. But everybody says they are smart children. The boy is very familiar with strangers. I hope you won't think him too bold. He's always trying to learn. He'll get up in the world."

"I shall be entertained by him; and my friend will be delighted with his sister."

"His sister's a bashful piece, which is nothing though but modesty. I'll send 'em to you." And making a curtsy, Mrs. Snyder withdrew.

Scarcely a minute elapsed before the two hopeful children, having the permission of their parent, ran into the room occupied by the guests.

"Come here, my fine fellow," said Mallex, speaking to the boy, while Fawner, some distance in the rear, beckoned to the girl.

"Have you got something for me?" asked the ragged urchin.

"Oh yes. Here's a piece of gold—a little dollar—that will buy you many nice things."

"Laws! Where is it? Le'me see it!" cried the little fellow, rushing forward and springing upon the knee of the candidate.

"I'll give it to you presently. But first tell me your name," said Mallex, placing his hand on the lad's shoulder, and looking him in the face."

"Job."

"Job?"

"Yes, Job. And daddy says that's the name of a mighty rich man, who's going to run; but'll be beat."

"What makes your daddy think so."

"'Kaise, daddy says he won't fight."

"Won't fight?"

"No! He says he must be a dunghill, kaise the lawyer and other folks call him bad names, and he let's 'em do it."

"And is that the reason he'll be beaten?"

"Yes. The folks, daddy says, won't vote for any but game cocks. One of our old blue hen's chickens can whip a whole raft of dunghills."

"But you must tell your daddy that Mr. Job Mallex is no dunghill."

"He aint?"

"No, he'll fight!" and Mallex said this with such a ferocious countenance that the boy stared at him in surprise.

"He will?"

"Yes, he will fight. And he is going to punish that lawyer for telling lies on him."

"Laws! I wonder if he wouldn't let me see him do it? But how do you know? Did he tell you?"

"I am Mr. Mallex, myself."

"Laws! I'll tell mammy! Mammy likes you better than Mr. Prattle, kaise he always does his talking to daddy, and never says much to mammy or me. Mammy told sister and me that you was fine gentleman, and we must behave nice and genteel to you."

Just then the little girl, who had likewise been perched on Fawner's knee, happened accidentally to knock the old man's hat off, and his bald head frightened her. She sprang to the floor and endeavored to escape from him. He pursued; but his endeavours to reassure her were futile. She began to cry, and struggled to get away, notwithstanding the tempting promises of the smiling old man. But when the scene began to grow noisy, the bell rang for breakfast.

"I'll show the way!" said the undaunted boy, when Mallex arose. And he conducted them into an adjoining room where the repast had been set out for them.

Mallex and Fawner sat at the table with voracious appetites, and congratulating themselves, in audible tones, upon having been so fortunate as to find the way to the "Red Lobster." Mrs. Snyder, smiling graciously, poured out the coffee, which they drank and praised. They never had met with lobsters so deliciously prepared; and the bread, which was home-made, was infinitely superior to any they had been accustomed to find elsewhere.

Mrs. Snyder, seeing her guests apparently so well pleased and heartily employed, embraced an early occasion

to withdraw, that she might question the children, not doubting they had as usual ascertained the names and objects of the gentlemen.

No sooner had the hostess disappeared, than the coffee, which had been merely tasted, was thrown out of the window. The lobster followed, and was quickly consumed by a pig. The bread was thrust up the chimney, and the execrable butter was buried in the ashes.

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Snyder, coming in hastily, and smiling very pleasantly, "I didn't know who it was I had the honour of entertaining. My Job says you are Mr. Mallex himself."

"I am, indeed, madam," said Mallex; "but no excuses are necessary. There can be no doubt we have had the best your house affords."

"That is just so, sir. We always set before strangers the best of everything. It is a duty we owe to the public. But if I had known it was Mr. Mallex, I shouldn't have spoken so free on the subject of the election, or leastways so discouraging."

"You did not discourage me, my dear madam."

"And I won't! You'll find it so. I like you better than that soft, milk-and-water Prattle, and that's enough. You shall have Snyder's influence. Count on the 'Red Lobster.' And my boy says you'll thrash that Persevere lawyer who's been slandering you."

"I shall certainly do that, madam."

"Then your business is done. We're all peaceable people, but we like spunk. A brave man is always popular. When they see you ain't afraid to fight, nobody'll give you any offence."

"I shall be very happy, truly, madam, if it be my good fortune to enjoy the favour of the 'Red Lobster.'"

"If, when I say you *shall*! Never fear! Snyder'll never say nay, when I say yes. Though I think Prattle has made some sort of a bargain with him."

"Madam, if elected, I will have influence at Washington. Your husband shall have an office in the custom house, if he desires it, and your son, when old enough, may, by my means, be put in the naval school, or sent to West Point."

"I declare, you're the man for me. Consider your business done!"

Mallex and Fawner, after taking a friendly leave of the hostess, proceeded on their way. They travelled slowly, bowing to all the good people they met, and praising all the rural improvements they passed, when the proprietors were near enough to overhear them. At the smithy of every village, either the shoes of the horses, or some portion of the iron of the carriage had to be examined, and Mallex never failed to reward the honest craftsmen. His horses were fed six times in the forenoon at as many different inns. And wherever he went it became known to every one, that he was the rich candidate for nomination before the district convention about to assemble.

Finally, wearied, and perhaps somewhat disgusted, the ambitious rich man ordered the coachman to direct his course towards his country house, some few miles to the north. As they passed through a long lane at a slow pace, Mallex, who had fallen into a fit of abstraction, was aroused by his humble companion.

"If it would not be presumption, sir, I would humbly ask if I did not hear you say that you intended to fight the lawyer——"

"Fawner, you and I were made for each other. Presumption! Don't use the word again, my friend. But, I repeat, our minds must have been made of similar material; for I was just then thinking on the same subject which occupied your thoughts. My dear Fawner, I know you have religious scruples on the subject of hostile meetings, and I respect them. I would not for the world do violence to your principles. I need a friend. I must endeavour to find a trusty, generous, magnanimous friend, who will serve me as one good friend delights to serve another. But, my dear Fawner, do not imagine that I shall be offended, because your conscience, and the discipline of your church, will not permit you to do me the kind office I shall require of some one less scrupulous, and altogether free from the shackles of the preachers."

"Oh, sir, I am not opposed in conscience to resenting an affront or injury. Six times I have had disputes with our minister, and out of that number, five times I was in

the right. I owe you much, and feel it to be my duty to serve you. If I can answer the purpose, sir——You know, sir, I was out in '18, and smelt gunpowder——”

“True, Fawner, and it is well known that you behaved bravely on the field.”

“Oh, sir, I'm no coward. I never was afraid of danger! And if we should have another war, sir, I would delight in drawing the sword once more, sir. I was a captain, sir——”

“I know it. Now hear me,” said Mallex, interrupting his companion, who was fired with animation at the recollection of exciting scenes in his more youthful and better days. Mallex knew well that the poor old man was an enthusiast on the subject of defending one's country; and that, being so stimulated, he was in the right condition to hear what he wished to deliver. “My dear Fawner, I know you are neither a coward nor a pharisee. War is sanctioned by all nations, and is justified in the bible. Each nation is but a family, and all men are merely members of national families. If we did not wage war in defence of right, and to repel aggression, we could not be respected, and would be imposed on, and despoiled by our neighbours. Is it not so?”

“Most certainly, sir!”

“Well, then, it is right and proper that Congress should declare war when we are sufficiently provoked by insult and injury. So much is indisputable, as regards nations. But then the law-makers decree that individual members of the nation shall not redress their own grievances when assaulted or offended by their neighbours. That may be legally right, but I contend it is rationally wrong. The laws do not always afford an adequate remedy. If I am justifiable in repelling with violence a foreign foe because the laws of nations do not sufficiently protect us, I say I have also the right to redress a private wrong when the statutes do not furnish me ample protection. What is the difference in the eyes of God?”

“Upon my word I don't know!”

“I thought not! There is none. But such laws for the restraint of the injured, and for the protection of the malignant and the cowardly, must have a demoralizing influence in the community. It will breed slanderers, assassins of private character, who are encouraged, by a

sense of security, to commit every species of outrage on the peaceable and unoffending. Our sons will be pusillanimous, our daughters will be without virtue, and our posterity will be degraded in the eyes of the world! Look at the difference between the states where duelling is practised and where it is punished. In the former there is not a millionth part of the scandals and calumnies which disgrace the latter!"

"It does appear so, sir!"

"To be sure it does! Fawner, I am the victim of a dark slanderer, and may lose the nomination unless I triumph over him. Although everybody may seem to be theoretically opposed to the use of personal chastisement in such cases, I tell you there is not a man, woman, or child in this district that don't despise a coward. Job Mallex is no coward!"

"Coward? No, sir!"

"Even you, my best friend, would look upon me with contempt, if you thought me deficient in courage."

"But I don't, sir—I don't think so! I know to the contrary, sir!"

"You believe to the contrary—but you don't know it. I hope you will know it. If I get this nomination and election, which amounts to the same thing, for the dram-sellers and primary drill-managers control the unthinking voters, my habits will be necessarily changed. I shall be much absent. My partner, Bainton, you know, is not an efficient man. We shall have to introduce a third partner, Fawner. That is, if I am elected."

"And that seems to be a very sure thing."

"Not sure, by any means, unless the foul mouth of Persever be effectually closed. I have a plan—an honourable plan—to do it. But I shall have need of a true, confidential friend. I know such an one—but I fear his religious scruples would prevent him from acting."

"If you mean me, sir, have no doubts. I'll strike him if he repeats his slanders! I'll go further, sir; I'll make him retract everything."

"That would not answer, my dear Fawner. I must do it. I must call him out. You understand me. I must call him out! There will be no fight. All slanderers,

they say, are cowards. But the fame of the thing will secure me the nomination and election. Alexander Hamilton, a communing member of the church, found it necessary to fight. True, he fell. If I should fall, Fawner, you are my executor, and may be my successor in business—that is, provided your scruples shall not prevent you from serving your friend. I have learned that you conducted an affair some forty years ago in a most skilful manner."

"That was Major Hook's! I was young, then. He shot his man down. Then I said it should cease. But the major granted another fire. I protested against it and left the field. His antagonist, propped before and behind, then crippled the major for life. Those were exciting times. I was young then, and rich. But now——"

"You are older, and decidedly poor. But you might be rich again, if the church ——"

"The church! I'll blink it, sir! I'll do my best for you. Command me, sir. You've been my friend—I'll be yours. It is a shame for any one to be slandered, and to have his prospects destroyed, without the privilege of chastising his enemy. I've heard the tales that rascal whispered through the city concerning the Parkes and that bastard, Ned Lorn. I'll do it, sir!"

"Thank you, Fawner! I'll write a challenge to-night. Oh, I would rather be dead, than have the world believe me the bad man this wretch describes! You have no idea how many sleepless nights and bitter tears he has cost me!"

"The villain shall suffer for it!"

"I wont kill him, Fawner. I wont even wound him. All I desire is that the world shall know I called him to an account, and that I am not a guilty coward."

"And the world shall know it, sir!"

"It shall!"

They were now in front of the banker's country residence, and were soon driven through the lawn up to the door, when they descended. Mallex, after ordering the coachman to remain in his seat, desired Fawner to accompany him to his library. When seated, Mallex wrote a challenge to Persever; a peremptory demand to meet him on

the field of honour, without equivocation or contingency. He merely alleged as the cause of his demand, certain words uttered by the lawyer during an interview in the presence of witnesses, which words were slanderous, and if suffered to go unnoticed, would be deeply injurious to his reputation.

He then wrote an article for a newspaper, which had been established by his capital, denouncing the false pretensions of an impostor, as designed to affect the standing of respectable men, &c. He did not name any of the parties; but any reader who had heard any portion of Ned Lorn's history, could not be at a loss to know who the denunciation was aimed at.

Fawner was charged with both of the papers, and was requested to proceed at once, and execute the mission with the least possible delay. He obeyed with alacrity; and without uttering more than a hasty adieu, departed.

Mallex then strode to and fro in his spacious library, his eyes glaring fiercely, and his hands performing menacing gestures.

"I'll shoot the meddling scoundrel!" he muttered. "I'll grind to powder every one who dares to interpose between me and the objects I have in view. Bainton, I think, is secured. Perhaps I did wrong to inform him of the manner of Parke's death. But that is the chain which binds him to me. Then there is the old hag! How shall I get rid of her? Who's there?" he cried, seeing the shadow of some one gliding from the door. No answer being received, he strode quickly out in the passage and seized the intruder. It was Tom Denny—or rather his own son. He dragged him by the collar into the library, and locked the door. Then regarding Tom's composed features a few moments in silence, he burst into a boisterous fit of laughter.

"So, Tom, you listened again, did you?"

"I did, sir," was the prompt reply.

"But why should you play the spy on me?"

"I did not design it. I waited till Mr. Fawner withdrew before approaching, and merely paused, and sought to retire when I heard your words of passion."

So. I believe you. You cannot possibly have any

rational motive for being my enemy. But it was the same old theme—the infernal old hag—you heard me speaking about, or to, once before. No matter. I was surprised to find any one within earshot of me, and must correct the habit of uttering my thoughts when alone, or rather when I suppose myself to be alone. But what brought you from the city? I did not tell you to come here?”

“I—I—thought I might be of service to you, sir,” stammered the young man.

“And so you may if you be really disposed to serve me. Get that infernal old harpy out of my way——”

“I will do no murder.”

“Murder! Who asked you? If you had a particle of genius you would send her off—so far away that she could not return. Or else plague her or frighten her into madness, so she might be confined the rest of her days. If none of these, you might easily entice her hither, and entrap her in the old prison-room above, where she would be comfortable, but where her voice could not be heard.”

The mansion was an old stone structure, erected before the Revolution, and among its many rooms, was one which seemed to have been designed for the confinement of prisoners. The only window in it was too high from the floor to be easily reached, and was guarded on the inside by iron bars deeply fixed in the solid masonry. It had been observed that when the shutters of the window were closed, which was effected by a wire that entered the window of the chamber above, no ordinary voice within the closed room could be heard without or within.

“I might do that, sir,” answered Tom, after some hesitation, “if I were assured her detention would be the only consequence.”

“You have my assurance of it. It would be unsafe to—to—no matter. Her cub of a son, Dick, would be suspicious. No; we would merely confine her until she could give a satisfactory assurance that she would ever after cease to annoy us.”

“Then, sir, the work is done,” said Tom.

“You speak so confidently, sir, that I have faith in your promise.”

“She is already there, sir.”

"Already there? Do you mean to say she is *now* in that chamber."

"I do, sir."

"Tom, you surprise me more and more. You are worthy to be my son. The game is in my own hands, and I'll make assurance doubly sure!"

"Remember your promise to me, sir!" said Tom, placing his hand on his father's arm, and arresting his steps as he moved eagerly towards the door.

"I will, Tom. I'll keep faith with you. But I must see her. Is she not in a furious passion?"

"By no means, sir; on the contrary she seems to be delighted. She declares that you have either promised to marry her, or that she intends to compel you to do so, I do not recollect which. She has not learned yet that I am your son, and has made me many promises. She likes the furniture, the carpets, &c., and says she will soon be mistress of all."

"Ha—ha—ha! How did you get her here, Tom? I thought she was too wise to venture alone into the lion's den."

"Oh, she thinks I am won over to her interest——"

"Did she divulge anything?" asked Mallex, quickly.

"She did not, although I endeavoured to induce her to confide in me, and make known the nature of the secret by which she supposes you are to be awed into a compliance with her horrible demands."

"Very good! She forgets not the danger that menaces herself!"

"And she was quite drunk, too. She came to your house in the city, and finding that you were not at home, declared she would go to your country residence if anybody would tell her the way. As she strode out of the door I heard her ask a stranger, who made no reply, if he knew where you lived in the country: and supposing she might ask others, I called her back, and said as I was coming hither myself I would show her the way."

"Tom, you *are* my son! But where was her dark shadow, her scowling son Dick?"

"He stood at the corner."

"I thought so!"

"When the buggy was ready, I invited her to get in—"

"Was it in front——"

"No, sir; it was in the alley. I led her through the yard to the stable. She seemed to grow more intoxicated every moment, as if she had been drinking very recently, and only muttered something unintelligible about Dick, as I assisted her up. I whipped out and drove in the opposite direction from Dick. But she soon snatched the reins from my hands, and, although she was unable to speak distinctly, I was astonished to find she could drive very well. She turned back and drove to where her son was standing. She paused merely long enough to tell him to go home——"

"Did he see you?" asked Mallex, quickly.

"No, sir. I leaned back in the carriage, resolved that he should not behold my features, and he did not. She then drove but a few paces farther before she replaced the reins in my hand, and told me to drive hither. I did so, and had no difficulty in conducting her to the prison-room, where I said you would see her."

"Admirable, my boy! you may have the horse and buggy. No! sell them. Drive some fifty miles away, when you leave here, and sell them. Put the money in your pocket. It shall be yours."

"I hope, sir, your desire to remove the objects which Dick could identify, does not proceed from——"

"No. I understand. She shall live."

They proceeded together towards the prison room. When they drew near the door, Tom suggested, in a whisper, that his father should see the old woman alone, which was assented to.

Mallex pushed open the door and entered the chamber, conjecturing what would be the nature of the salutation from his unconscious prisoner, and triumphing in the conviction that she could no longer dictate terms to him.

She sat leaning back in a large arm-chair fast asleep. Her bonnet, a fine new one, was crushed out of all shape; and although in a deep slumber, the horrible involuntary vibrations of her head kept the chair in motion. She had rings on her coarse fingers, and a fine pin sparkled on her breast.

"Old woman!" said Mallex, in a deep and distinct

voice, after regarding her a few moments in silence. "Awake!" he continued, placing his hand on the back of the chair, and pushing it so far forward, that if she had not obeyed him she would probably have fallen on the floor. As it was, she found herself in a standing position when her eyes opened.

"Tom! Dick! No! It's you, my darling pet!"

Mallex merely laughed at her.

"Why, my sweet imp, I didn't know you'd come so soon. Why don't you talk to me?"

"Woman, what do you want? Speak your errand."

"I want this house—I like it. I have about as much right to it as you. But I want you, too, as I told you once. And I want a purse of gold, that weighs a full pound, for a young friend of mine."

"Nothing else?"

"To be sure—a great many things, since they say you're so mighty rich. But I can't think of 'em all at once. I'm glad to find you so liberal, any how."

"But suppose I refuse to let you have anything?"

"Ha—ha—ha! That would be a purty joke!"

"I think it would be no joke."

"Yes it would. You darsent say it in yearnest. You know I have you in my power!"

"No; I don't know that."

"You do! You know you darsent refuse me anything."

"I do refuse you everything."

"After I done that ugly job for you! and would you run the risk of hanging, rather than share your fortin with me?"

"You mean the murder of Parke?" asked Mallex, with composed features and a smile. "You have had your wages. You have been already paid too much for that ugly job, as you call it. And as for hanging, I shall not run any greater risk by refusing to grant your absurd request."

"Why, how you talk! You seem to take it easier than you used to."

"Your own neck would suffer first."

"I'm old, and may repent. I've got nothing to live for, or with, but you, my honey. I can't sleep, and mought lmost as well be dead."

"Were you not asleep a few minutes ago, you impudent old liar!"

"You talk so bold I must cow you!" said she, with such an excessive shaking of the head, increased by the agitation of her nerves, that her crumpled bonnet fell from her head. "I say I can't sleep in my bed—I can't sleep at all without brandy and laudnum. I'm tormented by my conscience, and 'll turn state's evidence! I'll go mad, and they won't hurt me—but they'll hang you?"

"I have no fears. I shall grant you nothing."

"Grant nothing? Go write me a deed for this house this minute, or I'll go and inform on you."

"Oh, you may stay in the house," said Mallex, with a sardonic smile.

"I shall have the house, hey? I thought we were too good friends to fall out! But go write the deed, honey, and then we'll be as thick as ever."

"No."

"Then I'll go and confess!" said she, making a step towards the door.

"No you won't!" said Mallex, grasping her arm, and whirling her into the centre of the room.

"Why you done that as easy as if I had been a baby! You are stronger than me—but take care!" Saying this she drew a dagger, which Mallex knocked from her hand with his cane.

"This will not serve you!" said he, taking up the instrument.

"Wont you let me go?" she asked, panting with excitement and alarm.

"No. You like the house—stay in it. This room is your prison. Here you are to live the balance of your days. And when you die, I'll have you buried under the pig-sty."

"They'll hunt me here!" said she, glancing up at the iron bars across the window. "Tom knows I'm here. He'll tell my Dick."

"Will he? We'll see. Come in, Tom." Tom, who had heard everything, entered.

"Tom! my good boy, wont you tell Dick where I am?"

"No, I am to be your jailor. I must obey my father!"

"Father? He your father!"

"He is my son," said Mallex, still enjoying his triumph. He is the child of Olivia, that was sent into Pecan alley."

"Marcy!" cried the old woman. "I'm trapped! Tom, did you bring me here to have me confined in this way?"

"I did. I thought it was my duty. And I avoided the searching eyes of your son, so that he might never know who it was with you in the buggy."

"He saw the horse——"

"He'll never see him again!" said Mallex, exultingly.

"We've thought of that."

"But Tom," continued the guilty woman, "You don't know that your father hired me——"

"I do!" cried Tom, interrupting her. "I know it all, miserable woman! And it was because I knew you might at any time bring him to—to punishment, that I enticed you into this room. I would not see my father——Oh, I am as miserable as anybody!" cried Tom, in tears.

"Let us leave her, Tom," said Mallex, leading out his son. "She will need no bed. She can't sleep in one. We'll leave the chair for her, and the rest of the furniture, provided she behaves herself. He locked the door. Then screams were dimly heard. He ran up to the room above; and pulling the wire, all was changed to silence and darkness below.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PEREMPTORY CHALLENGE.

NED slumbered fitfully the night after the reception of the letter from his friend in the city. It was one of those epistles which stir the mind profoundly, but leave all its efforts lost in a sea of conjecture. Ned, however, had impulsively acted upon one of its hints before weighing the consequences. The letter to Lonsdale was the result of an impromptu conviction, and was no more thought of by him. And it might have been written even if he could

have foreseen the effect it was to produce upon such a shallow mind as that of the proud citizen.

Ned was at the wharf when the boat landed, and the first of more than a hundred passengers that stepped on board. During the passage down the river several of his acquaintances bowed slightly in recognition, but sought no friendly converse with him. The sensitive young man felt pained at this, and could not avoid supposing there must be some cause, hidden from him, for such apparent estrangement. He wandered about impatiently, from one portion of the large steamer to another, as if his own exertions might accelerate the speed of the boat.

Happening to see a newspaper lying on a table near which no one else was sitting, as if it had been read and thrown aside by its owner, he picked it up, and the first article that arrested his eye was headed "FALSE HEIRS—IMPOSTORS." It was the production of Mallex, and published in a paper established by his capital, which, however, now professed to be more elevated in its tone, and fastidious in its morals, than any of its neighbours.

The secret was revealed to poor Ned why his acquaintances avoided him! He had seen the paper handed about among the passengers from Summerton, and of course there were among them one or more sufficiently acute to discover that our hero was the culpable individual aimed at.

The pang was but momentary. Ned was a man, now. The flush of rage that gleamed upon his face was but as the reflection of the lightning upon a distant cloud, and was gone in an instant. Nor was it succeeded by a startling pallor. But the young man's resolution was taken, his purpose fixed, and his features only indicated the determination he had formed, to see the publisher of the paper, at a convenient season, and have a satisfactory explanation, or else—he would not decide what should be the consequence.

When the boat landed at the foot of Walnut street, Ned was bowed to as he passed along by but one individual, and that was old Captain Searles, the obliging and useful living index stationed there for the benefit of strangers. A little further up the street he met Bainton—his uncle Eugene—with a traveling coat on his arm, and preceded by a porter

having in charge his trunk and valise. It was impossible to avoid a mutual recognition; and Ned, although he did not desire to exchange any words with his unjust kinsman, supposed that the latter would certainly accost him in his usual conciliatory manner. But it was not so. Bainton stared an instant in his nephew's face, and then hurried past without a nod or word. Even this change was deeply felt by Ned, although he despised the man, and had ever repulsed his friendly advances. He might be his kinsman, but he could never be worthy his friendship until all the wrongs he had committed were redressed, and full restitution made.

But this was not the last blow which fate seemed to have prepared for the victim which fortune in her capricious freaks delighted to persecute. When passing some of the principal stores in a fashionable street, Ned saw Mrs. Lonsdale and Alice alight from their carriage and enter one of those magnificent establishments which only the rich can afford to visit. They passed within a few feet of him. Alice had seen him before she entered. He accosted her. She paused but for a moment, and then as if by a violent effort turned her eyes away and vanished. Ned did not dare to pursue. Alice was not indebted to him for any favours conferred, she had not despoiled him of anything, save, perhaps, his heart—which could not be worth a great deal—and even of that he might have been mistaken. She had a right to do as she pleased, and he would be the last person in the world to require her to behave differently.

He strode on, and even occasionally dismissed the recollection of the painful incident from his mind in the ensuing whirlpool of his ideas. When he reached the office of his friend, he was met by Persever, with a smile and an open hand.

"Sit down, Ned, This is about the hour I expected you. You look well, but agitated. I, too, was once almost as impetuous as yourself. But your principles are correct, and will always triumph, in the end, over your rash impulses."

"I hope so, sir," said Ned. "But, nevertheless, sometimes I find my sudden impulses to be right and proper, and fully sanctioned by my deliberate judgment."

"True, it is always the case when the act is a beneficent one—but nearly always wrong, when it is of a contrary nature."

"I will not controvert the saying. I acted rashly and wrongly when I wrote the challenge to Lonsdale. I hope I did right when I subsequently sent him a retraction and apology."

"Have you done that?"

"I have."

"I doubt whether it will benefit you in his estimation. But it was right; and cannot, you know, according to my theory, be attended in the end by any injurious effect."

"I do not fear it. The sense of right in my own breast is all I ask—let the consequences be what they will. Lonsdale was my senior—but that does not always bar one from requiring redress—and the step-father of Alice. But she did not belong to me. It was a foolish business. I had enemies who deserved my vengeance. Lonsdale has not the capacity to injure any one. I had been taught that duelling was unjustifiable, under any circumstances; and I have assented to it. Yet if——"

"If what?"

"If there should be no other means of obtaining redress from the publisher or editor of, the ——, I shall probably suppress my convictions of the impropriety and immorality of the practice, until I——."

"Oh, you may disregard the theory when it does not answer your purpose."

"No, sir; not disregard it. It is right. But I may violate it with a readiness to submit to the penalty, so that my foe shall be involved in the suffering. It is a sin to commit suicide. But is the doomed victim censured who seizes an implacable tyrant and plunges with him down a precipice?"

"Ah, you need not argue the case with me. I have never committed myself on the subject. You have seen the article in the ——? It was written by Mallex; I know his style. It is both insidious and strong. He is a powerful bad man. The publisher or editor is a mere nobody. He has neither mind, heart or education. Let him go; he will never win anything but contempt."

"But the other? He shall not escape with impunity!"

"No. I am his man. He has demanded satisfaction for certain words spoken by me, and I have accepted the alternative he desired. It was for this reason I wanted your presence."

"For heaven's sake, let me fight him!" cried Ned, livid with rage.

"I shall do no such thing. That would be one of the rash, wrong acts. But you shall attend me on the ground, and act for me in adjusting the preliminaries. It is now about the hour for his friend to meet you here. I shall withdraw and leave you to settle everything, only stipulating that pistols shall be used; that we are not to go more than five miles from the city; and that the time of meeting shall be immediately—to-day, if possible."

"But, my dear sir, the whole difficulty has its origin in me. I am the cause of it. Why not permit me——"

"No more on that point. He has not challenged you, and he will not. He might assassinate you, but it would not answer his purpose to shoot you in open combat. It would defeat his election. He will meet me, not because he deems himself unjustly injured, but for the purpose of acquiring a reputation, and to secure his nomination. It is merely one of the tricks of the demagogue. But I may defeat his object."

"Who is his friend?"

"Fawner."

"Fawner? Impossible! He is one of the strictest sect, with broad phylacteries."

"Oh yes, when worldly gain may be secured by it. But now the profit is the other way. It was ever thus. Those who make the loudest professions of purity, are often the most facile under temptations, and the first to fall. The hypocrite and the devil are never far apart, and the devil himself will quote scripture if it answer his purpose. But this Fawner was once in better society. He was educated and rich, but got plucked by the stock-jobbers. He was wild, too, and skilled in the use of arms. Watch him. Yet, with my eyes open, they shall be welcome to all the advantages they can win. You, I know, are not experienced in such affairs. Stipulate the distance and time, and leave the rest to me. I will return within an hour."

"Saying this Persever withdrew, and a moment after Fawner was seated in the office. The old man was smiling, and perfectly gentlemanly in his demeanor. He alluded without hesitation to his singular position, and begged Ned, as a personal favour, that he would not mention to any one the fact that he had officiated in the capacity of a second on such an occasion. Ned readily assenting, there were no obstacles thrown in the way to cause a departure from the limits designated by Persever. All the details were speedily arranged. The parties were to cross over to Camden at four o'clock that afternoon, by different boats if possible, and proceed together in different carriages until they should find a fitting place for the exchange of shots.

No sooner had Fawner withdrawn than Persever reappeared. He assented to everything. They then sallied out in quest of pistols, which they procured, as they stated, merely for target exercise, at a shop in — street.

As they left the shop they were encountered by Tim Trudge, and one of his neighbors, an honest fat farmer. It seemed that Susan had a presentiment of danger attending Ned, inasmuch as he did not explain the contents of the letter received the preceding evening so fully or so satisfactorily as was his usual custom. He had, moreover, been silent in regard to the letter written to Mr. Lonsdale. Therefore she sent for Tim at an early hour in the morning, and urged him to follow Ned in the next boat, and not lose sight of him while he remained in the city. Tim of course obeyed; and not only that, but his good-natured neighbour accompanied him. On the way down the river, Tim explained sufficiently the history of Ned to enlist the sympathy of his honest neighbour, who, although he had never had any personal acquaintance with Ned, declared he was quite ready to defend him, or to serve him in any way he could.

"Why, Tim!" exclaimed Ned, "what are you doing here?"

"Me? I'm on business for Susan."

"And Susan must be obeyed in anything that's not unreasonable," said Tim's merry-faced friend.

"But, Lord bless us, what're you doing *here*?" asked

Trudge, pointing to the shop, the windows of which were filled with guns, pistols, decoy ducks, etc.

"On business, Tim—business with Mr. Persever. But it is an unusual question for you to ask."

"Go about your business, Tim," said Persever. "Sell your eggs, while we are hatching affairs of more importance. Come, Ned, we must return to the office before we go over."

The belligerent couple then mounted into a hack, and were driven briskly away.

"What was that thing he had under his arm?" asked Tim's friend, who was likewise named Tim, but must be called Timothy for the sake of distinction.

"Blamed if I don't ask! Come, let's go in and find out. See here," he continued, very much excited, stepping into the shop, and addressing the one who had been waiting upon Persever and Ned, "do you know who those two gentlemen was, that jist come out of here?"

"No; I don't know either of them," was the reply.

"Didn't they get that box-thing one had under his arm, in here?" asked Timothy.

"Yes."

"Did they buy it?"

"No; but they are to pay for the use of them."

"You let 'em have it, and say you don't know 'em?" continued Timothy.

"Certainly. The eldest deposited twenty dollars, the price of the pistols, which is all the security I want."

"Pistols!" said poor Tim, almost annihilated.

"It's a duel! As sure as a gun it's a duel!" said Timothy, slapping his broad hand down on the counter.

"Do you know them?" asked the shopkeeper.

"Yes!" cried Tim, "and murder's a-going to be done if it ain't stopped! Susan knew it! I say, sir, it must be stopped. You must take the pistols away from 'em, or mischief'll be done!"

"That's their business, not mine," was the reply.

"And you're a going to let 'em fight with your pistols?"

"I don't care if they do. It won't hurt the pistols."

"Oh, you—you'll be a murderer, sir; I'll have you taken up and arrested. You'll be guilty of shedding poor Ned's blood."

"Who is poor Ned?"

"The young one. The tall pale one," said Tim.

"What! Do you think he intends to shoot himself in a duel?"

"But—but—Oh, neighbor, let us *do* something or other, and not be standing here talking to this pistol-man!" cried Tim, moving towards the door.

"My friends!" cried the vender of pistols, as the two Tims were leaving the shop, "if they are really bent on fighting a duel, perhaps you'd better not interfere. You might get into a scrape. No doubt they have good reason for fighting, or they wouldn't run the risk. Let every one attend to his own business. If it is no business of yours, you'd better take my advice, and not meddle in the matter."

Timothy and Tim paid no heed to the gratuitous advice of the pistol-vender, but hastened toward the mansion of the banker, in the supposition that something definite might be ascertained there. And, sure enough, when they drew near the dwelling, they found Fawner standing in the door, and a moment after a carriage drove up, from which Mallex himself descended. He held a brace of pistols in his hand, and even seemed to make an ostentatious display of them as he entered the house.

"Mr. Fawner!" cried Tim, just in time to secure the old man's attention before he closed the door.

"Well, what do you want?" replied Fawner, pausing a moment.

"I want to know, by gosh! if Mr. Mallex and Ned Lorn are a-going to fight a duel."

"No—hem—that is, not that I—but why do you ask me? What do I know about duels, and such abominable things? Oh, it's you, Trudge, is it?"

"Yes, it's me, me and my friend, here. And we believe Mr. Mallex is a-going to try to shoot at Ned after robbin' him of his fortin. But he shan't do it, I'll be consarned if he does!"

"Yes, and I'll mow him down, first!" said Timothy.

"You are both silly creatures to suppose anything of the sort," said Fawner. Then a moment after, and evidently in accordance with a hint he received from his principal, who was listening within, he continued: "But to

satisfy yourselves, come in, and see Mr. Mallex himself. He is at home."

"No you don't! I'll be hanged if you do!" said Tim, shaking his head. You caught me once in your man-trap down in —— street."

"Yes, consume him, and he'd play the same game agin!" said Timothy, who had been informed of the occurrence by Tim.

"Away with you! away with you both!" cried Mallex, stepping forward to the door. "If you stay another minute, I'll send for the police."

"The police? That's it! Thank you!" said Tim. "We'll go there first. That's the idea. We'll see who'll be arrested first. Come, Timothy."

And the honest couple set off in the direction of the mayor's office.

"He has accepted, sir," said Fawner.

"Of course he has!" returned Mallex. "He is no coward. Once I thought differently; but have learned it was a mistake. He is not one of your law-abiding citizens who would utter injurious insinuations, or offer an open insult, and then take refuge under the shelter of the law. He is a brave, determined enemy; and therefore I must silence him, either by a ball in his gullet or a perfect vindication of my honour. Who's his second?"

"Ned Lorn."

"Hah! Then, Fawner, I'm a dead man! Farewell to Job Mallex, and all his lofty aspirations!"

"Why, sir? I hope not, sir!"

"I fear it is past hoping for! Why? Because my enemy's friend is my enemy. He hates me, and will neglect no opportunity of giving his principal the advantage. Yes, they have the advantage of us. You have no ill feeling for either of them. It is too late for me to procure another second."

"I do hate them both, sir, although it may be unchristian in me to say so!" responded Fawner. "And if they get any advantage on the ground, let me be held accountable for it. No, sir! You will come off conqueror. Only promise me one thing: that if you draw blood, you will not grant him another fire."

"I promise. That would answer my immediate purpose. Now promise *me* one thing," said Mallex, taking a coin from his pocket. "That you will not look at both sides of this coin, which is to be thrown up when the question of position arises."

Fawner promised, and placed the coin in his pocket without looking at it.

"When do we meet?" demanded Mallex.

"At four—over in Jersey."

"I wish it were at two!" was the response. "And I shall make no provision for a fatal contingency, since you are resolved to be my friend indeed. After the affair is over, if the result should not be fatal to him, we must drive out to the country house and remain in quietude until the storm in the city blows over. The more the press shall condemn, the more my good constituents will applaud."

They lost no time in making a thorough examination of the pistols, which were fired several times in the yard, and found to be in perfect order.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RUPTURE.

WHEN Ned and Persever returned to the office of the latter (his family being kept profoundly ignorant of the "cause" in which he was then engaged) it was yet several hours before the time appointed for repairing to the field of honour; and the former, after some manifestations of restlessness, could not avoid owning that he felt an irresistible inclination to spend a portion of his leisure time in the company of Alice.

"Gratify it, by all means," said Persever. "I, too, feel as if I had useless hours on my hands. In ordinary cases of this nature most principals, and particularly if lawyers, would find enough to do; but I am so confident of returning unscathed, that I cannot commence writing a single document in view of a certain contingency."

"All I can say," replied Ned, "is that I will be quite prepared, and very eager to stand up in your place, whenever your objection to it shall be removed."

"My body must be first removed!" said Persever, firmly. "But, Ned, you must not be quite sure of having a gratifying interview with Alice——"

"I am not sure of it. If I were, I would not seek the interview. I saw her in Chestnut street, and was recognized by her. There seemed to be a change——"

"Oh yes! The truth and simplicity of the ingenuous girl must, it seems, be succeeded by the vanities of the fine, fashionable, proud, heartless lady!"

"Can it be possible for her to be so transformed?"

"I fear so. Our good friend Tim called here yesterday to ask if I knew what was the matter. I went there to see if it was as he described. I found the house a perfect rendezvous of the distinguished belles and mustachioed beaux of the four cities, Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. They were coming and going continually. Perfumed notes and fancy cards were brought to Alice and her mother on silver salvers by richly liveried servants. Alice really seems to *enjoy* such things in your absence."

"Yet I will see her," said Ned.

"Perhaps!" rejoined Persever. "Fashion has its caprices. She may be engaged with her Italian music master, or her dress maker, or——"

"Then my call would not be in vain—so that I might know the reason of her refusal to see me. I have not obtruded often——"

"No. Perhaps too seldom. But you may rely upon it that both Lonsdale and his wife, with all the confederates they could enlist, have omitted nothing to wean Alice from her childish attachment. It is your poverty, Ned. It was different when they supposed you would inherit Daniel L. Parke's fortune. The tale of your illegitimacy, and all that, is a mere pretext. By the way, Bainton has deposited in bank a hundred thousand dollars to the credit of the estate of your deceased uncle, with documentary evidence that the sum so placed is in full settlement of his share of the capital and profits of the western adventure. You

muse. Rely upon it, this step was not taken without a full reconciliation between the bankers, and a firm determination to oppose your claims as the lawful heir. It was indeed the result of my journey to New Mexico. They knew I was prepared to prove their indebtedness to the elder Parke."

"And now, if Mallex should silence or close your lips forever——"

"He will not do it. I *know* he wont injure a hair of my head. But no more. Time is flying. If it is your determination to call at Lonsdale's before we go over the river, hasten away. Tim may come and carry you off to Summerton by force. I will stay here, and meet him if he comes, and prevent him from alarming my family. I will assure him, on my honour, that you do not intend to fight."

Ned departed with a serious visage, and a determination to know, if possible, the sentiments of Alice, in regard to him, independently of the influences that surrounded her. He had plighted his faith in all honesty of purpose, and believed that he could never love another as he had done the companion of his childhood. But he was still quite young; and he was one of those enthusiasts who did everything heartily, and with all his might; one who advanced or receded with equal momentum. If the once dearest object of his heart smiled upon him, no obstacle, no danger could prevent his approach; if she frowned, none could be more resolute in his estrangement.

Unfortunately for his prospects, the letter he had written the preceding day had produced an effect upon the mind of Lonsdale quite the reverse of what he expected. That gentleman, thus relieved of the apprehension of personal peril, experienced, perhaps, a not unnatural revulsion of sentiment in regard to Ned. While he feared him, he respected him. When the fear was removed, the respect likewise vanished, and in its place was a feeling of aversion and resentment. And in consequence he lost no time in adopting such measures as would be likely to result in a complete termination of our hero's acquaintance with any of the members of his family. He resolved, inasmuch as there was an intimation in Ned's letter that he might call

in person to express more fully his regrets for the silly message he had sent him, that an early day should be fixed for making a long-promised visit to some of the fashionable and aristocratic friends of his family in New York. And when the malicious article in the paper was read by him, he openly rallied his forces against Ned, and had the satisfaction of seeing Alice remain quite unmoved under the storm of depreciation and obloquy aimed at her friend and lover. Not one word did she offer in his defence. On the contrary, she seemed to smile with the rest at the smart things uttered by the fine beaux. Then, and never till then, did Lonsdale inform her of the hostile note which Ned had sent him by the hands of Persever. Alice was of course much shocked at it. And such were the grounds of her conduct as described by Tim, and as witnessed by Ned in the morning.

Nothing daunted, however, our hero ascended the steps of the mansion and rang the bell. Having no cards with him, he sent up his name by the fine servant who bowed him in, requesting to see Mr. Lonsdale, and afterwards Miss Dimple. He was shown into a large and elegantly furnished parlour, where there were several spotlessly gloved young gentlemen awaiting an audience, and who seemed to cast curious, if not impertinent glances at him, for he happened to be not quite fashionably costumed. Ned had often met them in Chestnut street, and had, perhaps, been introduced to one or two of them; but he paid no sort of attention to them now, as they did not seem inclined to exchange salutations.

Mr. Lonsdale came in and bowed distantly and coldly to our hero, as if he had been merely a master workman, or an assessor of taxes. At the same moment the fashionable young gentlemen were bowed to by a polite negro servant, who conducted them to the saloon of the ladies."

"Mr. Lonsdale," said Ned, when they were alone, "I desired to see you, merely to reiterate my regret——"

"Oh, don't refer to that subject at all. Don't think of it. I never do. It is as a matter that never occurred, since no result followed."

"Then, sir, I may presume, I hope, that my impudence or indiscretion has left no trace of displeasure in your——"

"None. How could it? We were, as I may say, strangers. You had some slight acquaintance with my ward—Mrs. Lonsdale's daughter. There was no intimacy. There was nothing to cause either party to be particularly interested in the affairs of the other. When Alice was a mere girl, like other very young girls, she felt, or fancied she felt, some sort of an attachment for you, and you for her. She is now a woman, and you a man, and all such nonsense is to be forgotten by both of you. Your walks in life will now probably be in different directions, or at least not by the same paths, and hence all those things which passed between you will be as if they never existed. No resentment can be felt for errors never to be thought of again, since no renewal of intercourse can be possible from the difference of position and diversity of circumstances."

"True, sir, with regard to you and myself. And it may be the same with the rest. I hope, however, as I have sent to desire an interview with Miss Dimple, there will be no obstacle thrown in the way——"

"By no means! Of course you will have that honour, if she sees proper to grant it. She is the mistress of her own will in all such matters. I believe, however, she and her mother are at present temporarily engaged with some musical company in one of the saloons. I will go to them and relieve Alice, if she desires to see you." So saying, Mr. Lonsdale withdrew, leaving our hero alone, the victim of a tornado of unpleasant emotions.

Soon after a rustling of silk was heard in the hall, and Mr. Lonsdale's voice, although in whispers, could be distinguished. He said: "Refer to the challenge, show him this paper, and tell him plainly that the intercourse must cease. One bold effort, and the annoyance will be over. You will never regret it."

Then Alice entered, most extravagantly dressed, but slightly pale. She held a newspaper in her hand, and seemed undecided what to do with it. As she came slowly through the long parlour towards Ned, who had risen, and whose heart palpitated audibly, she made a motion as if about to throw the paper on one of the tables, but seemed to change her mind, or rather she did not seem to have the

will to accomplish her half-formed purpose. When she had advanced nearly to where Ned was standing, she paused, and nodded a recognition so coldly, that he, instead of tendering his hand, merely made a formal bow.

"Alice—I beg pardon—Miss Dimple, I trust you will forgive me. I desired to see you——"

"Well, well!" said she, seeing he hesitated.

"I was not prepared for such a reception as this—and am at a loss for words to express what I feel. Perhaps the feeling I now experience had better not be expressed. Such emotions were never before excited in your presence, and my expressions have always been of a different nature from those which now strive to find utterance."

"You may utter them," said she.

"No. Silence were best. Yet, may I not ask, why this change? Have I done aught to merit such coldness? Or have you, too, at last, and after all your protestations, joined my enemies, merely because I have not yet succeeded in recovering the fortune which cruel wrong and criminal injustice alone have withheld from me?"

"No. Not because misfortune has made you poor, or because your enemies have triumphed over you. I am endeavouring to perform my duty, and act in accordance with the advice of my mother; of him who stands in the position of a father; and of the rector of our church; to each and all of whom I have applied for advice—there were no others to whom I could apply—and they with one accord counsel me to discontinue the intimacy which has hitherto subsisted between us."

"And if other counsellors had been wanting," said Ned, sarcastically, "no doubt there would have been an abundance found in the rich and fashionable circles into which you have been conducted. It is true, I am poor, and may never be rich. The incompatibility of the thing would of course exclude me from their society. That alone should decide my fate. I do not murmur. Yet I would fain know what was the response of one other counsellor hitherto not named——"

"Who?" asked Alice.

"Your own heart!"

"Ned—Mr. Lorn! I will confess to you that the step

which I have been induced take was repugnant to my feelings, though exactly consistent with my sense of duty. It might have been different if I had seen you sooner after our last meeting—and I may not be so happy in the society of others as I have been—and the memory of our early friendship can never be forgotten—but I have seen it publicly asserted that your claims as the son and heir——”

“Cease, Alice! I am what you see me, and have seen me. You know what I am. Neither parentage nor fortune could make me better or worse. The question of my legitimacy, or of my rights, I have never pleaded before you.”

“True. And they did not constitute a condition in our—attachment. But the world—yes, the world has its requirements; which none may disregard. If it be true that your claims are not well-founded—if the fact that a fraud has been attempted should be manifest—although you may be, (and I am sure you are,) quite innocent of any criminal participation in it, however devoted, however true you might be to me, there could be but one result—unmitigated misery!”

“I would never have subjected you to the hazard. Everything should have been clearly proved, and firmly established, before the consummation. Oh, Alice, all I desired was a suspension of judgment until the trial were decided. But be it as you decree. We part now, perhaps forever. I will not be the first to seek a renewal of the intimacy. All I ask is, that you will do me the justice to admit—not to me, but within your own breast—that I have committed no act deserving your censure.”

“I am pained to say it is not quite in my power to make such an admission.”

“Ha!”

“You challenged my father. I learned it but to-day.”

“But to-day! And did he not mention my retraction of the challenge, and apology for having written it?”

“No, alas no! He did not! He did not!”

“Such, then, is one of your counsellors! From your own lips I learned that he had constrained your mother to yield a reluctant acquiescence in all his plans, and hence the apparent accordance of her opinion with his. As for

the priest, I suppose it may not be inconsistent with his character to counsel one of his flock to conform to the requirements of the world. Alice, you do not possess the strength of mind, I fear, nor the constancy of heart, I once gave you credit for! Farewell!"

Ned turned proudly on his heel, and hastily withdrew, without casting a look behind. Alice sank down on a sofa, pressed her hands to her face, and wept bitterly.

Mr. Lonsdale stood before her when she lifted up her head.

"It is over, sir," said she. "I have followed your advice. He is gone, I think, forever. He will never trouble you more. Would that I could say the same for myself! I pray heaven that the act which I have this day committed, incited thereto by those who ought to desire my happiness, may never be bitterly repented!"

"It will not be, Alice. It cannot be. You will soon forget——"

"I doubt it! The memories of our early, our guileless, our happy childhood, remain with us they say forever. And even when other objects and other pleasures make us cease to remember them by day, we will dream of them by night. I hope, sir, no one may have cause to reproach himself for promoting and abetting the procedure which has been so deliberately accomplished. If left to my own choice, it should not have been done. He has a brave and noble heart, a capacious mind, and may some day soar an eagle's flight above——"

"Nonsense, Alice! Why these regrets and reproaches? Why should any young lady desire to be upon terms of intimacy with one without fortune and character? That such is his condition you will not, you cannot deny. He is not a fitting associate, much less an eligible candidate for the hand of my ward. Every one will tell you the same thing. I am perfectly disinterested in my views, and, as you know, have forbidden my nephew——"

"Enough, sir—it was not necessary. You have succeeded in rupturing an old attachment; but all your power can never avail in any attempt to constrain me to form a new one. But enough. I'll be gay. Let us rejoin the company. I shall be merry now, and strive to forget—to

forget!" Such were the words she uttered as she went tripping back to her mother.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FIELD OF HONOUR.

WHEN Tim and Timothy arrived at the mayor's office, the court had risen. The last offender had been disposed of, and the chief magistrate of the city was enjoying his ease and comfort at home, surrounded by his family. So the two countrymen were directed to go to some magistrate of lesser magnitude, and have warrants issued for the arrest of the parties.

It was a long search; not that such functionaries were scarce, but from the multiplicity of signs and names about the doors. At length they found themselves in the presence of a corpulent, red-faced justice of the peace, who frowned and elevated his brows alternately, and sat in his great chair as proudly as a king on his throne.

"What do you want?" he asked, fiercely.

"We want you to hender two men from fighting," said Timothy.

"I never did such a thing in my life!" said the justice. "But after they fight, I'll make them pay for it. You'd better watch them, and be witnesses. Who are they?"

"Ned Lorn and Mr. Job Mallex," said Tim.

"Mr. Mallex, the great rich man?"

"Yes."

"He can pay. Watch him well. Be sure and see who strikes the first blow."

"It's a duel," said Tim; "they're going to fight with pistols."

"What? A duel? I never, in all my experience, had a case of that sort before me, and I must look at the law on the subject. Sit down."

The justice adjusted his spectacles, turned to his books,

over which he pored for more than a quarter of an hour, while the two Tims sat upon the thorns of impatience, fearing that before justice would get upon the track of the offenders the offence itself might be committed.

"Where are they going to fight?" interrogated the justice, after a calm perusal of the page.

"Over in Jersey, I'm dead sure," said Timothy, "for they daren't do it in the state where they live."

"But Ned lives in Jersey," said Tim.

"Maybe it isn't Ned, but that other one, Mr. Persevere, who's a-going to fight," said Timothy.

"Mr. Persever, the lawyer?" asked the justice.

"Yes, sir," said Tim. "It's either him or Ned Lorn, we don't know which."

The two or three constables and policemen present, laughed at the simplicity of the countryman.

"You don't know which?" exclaimed the justice.

"Then why do you come here? A pretty wild goose chase, truly! You don't know who's going to fight; you don't know where they are going to fight; and yet you come to me to stop the fight! Ridiculous! You had better go about your business, and *mind* your own business. Mr. Persever is one of the most promising lawyers in the city, and is the last man in it to break the law upon which he lives."

"And—and you live, don't you, by the breaking of the peace?" Timothy ventured to ask.

"But I don't break it, you dunce! I mend it, sir."

"But it's like our tin boiler," said Timothy, his great red face smiling merrily, and his faultless teeth displayed.

"How's that?"

"We have the tinkers at it every now and then, but it will leak in spite of 'em."

"Aint that disrespectful to us?" asked the justice, turning to one of his runners.

"If he means your honour for the tinker."

"But I don't," said Timothy. "I mean the peace is like the leaks in the old boiler."

"But, my goodness!" said Tim, rising, "they may be killing one another now! can't you do nothing, sir?"

"Nothing, if they are out of this state. My jurisdic-

tion is confined within the limits of Pennsylvania. If they are over the river, I can't reach them; I cannot extend my arms that far." This produced a smile in the court.

"But can't you stop 'em from going over there to fight?" asked Tim, desperately.

"Now you are getting on to the right track!" said the justice. "If you will make an affidavit that you have reason to believe the parties named are about leaving the state for the purpose of fighting a duel, I'll issue a warrant for their arrest."

"We'll do it," cried both the Tims.

"Very well. What's your name, sir?"

"Tim Trudge."

"I'll put it Timothy. That's your proper name, I'll warrant. Your name, sir?" he continued, turning to Tim's companion.

"Timothy."

"I hope you are not making a fool of me!" said the functionary, lifting his eyes, his face glowing with an intenser redness than usual. "Such a thing is unprecedented in my experience. Two men on the same side with the same name. I warn you! There is a penalty for contempt of court. Well! What's your other name?"

"Hay."

"That is, Timothy Hay. What business do you follow?"

"Farming."

"Mr. Timothy Hay, if you impose on me, the court will mow you down! You'll be cured, sir!"

"I tell the truth, your honour, and aint afraid to do my duty," was the honest response.

"Very well. Do you take them along, Mr. Grabb, and if the parties you are to arrest with this document had no intention to fight, and don't desire to fight, then bring these meddling gentlemen back to me."

"Yes, sir. But hadn't Mr. Barb better go with me? This Timothy Hay would be a stout customer in a tussel."

"Go with him, Barb," said the justice.

The four left the presence of the man of peace, and proceeded directly to the counting house of Mallex and Bainton, where they found some half a dozen clerks busy

with their pens, but not the head of the concern. Nor could they give the Dogberries any information as to the place where they would be likely to find their principal. They only laughed incredulously when informed that their employer was on the eve of fighting a duel. They were profoundly ignorant of the real character of their master, and had always supposed that inasmuch as the senior of the employees, Mr. Fawner, was an example of piety, and the most trusted of all the clerks, the respected head of the house must be a moral, law-abiding, conservative citizen.

Our party next visited the banker's mansion in — street. It was closed, and the only response they had to the ringing of the bell, was the deep, fierce barking of a bull-dog in the side yard, which clanked his chain at every utterance in his endeavours to get at them.

Then they directed their steps towards the office of the lawyer, knowing, as Tim expressed it, that if they could only secure Ned, he couldn't be shot, even if Mallex escaped them.

At the lawyer's office they found nobody but a stupid Irish girl who was scrubbing the floor, and one or two patient clients awaiting the return of Persever. When that event might happen, the scrubbing girl could not inform them. It might be the next minute; it might be longer.

"Didn't you see 'em go out?" asked Tim.

"Faith, and I did."

"Had they any pistols?"

"Pisthols?" iterated the girl, with dilated eyes.

"Yes, in a case."

"Not that I knows. They fetched a case, but wasn't it a law case?"

"How long ago was it?" demanded Grabb.

"Och, and it was about the time the sun was fernenst this crack in the floor, where I was cleaning up the tobacco spit, curses on the blackguards who did it!"

"We'll learn nothing from her. Let us go down to the river," said Barb.

Away they went towards the wharves. And after many fruitless inquiries, they at last espied both parties on the same boat, the Dido. Ned and Persever stood on the ex-

treble end of the boat, while Mallex and Fawner sat in an open carriage.

But just as the pursuing party reached the platform, the chains fell, and the boat's wheels began to revolve.

"Stop her!" cried Timothy, in a stentorian voice, when Tim pointed out the duellists.

"Stop! I arrest the boat!" cried Barb, who was a new officer, and had been sworn in that morning.

"Arrest your granny!" said one of the ferrymen, who remained on the platform.

"Yes, I do!"

"Then why don't you stop her?"

"She shall pay for it!" continued the new functionary, seeing the boat running out into the current with a perfect disregard of his cries and menaces."

"It's no use," said Grabb.

"Not a bit," said the ferryman.

"Let's go after 'em in another boat!" said Tim, leading the way to the next wharf.

"It's no use," continued the ferryman. The Dido can't be caught by any other craft in these waters."

"This way, gentlemen, if you're going to New York," said Captain Searles.

"Go to grass!" said Timothy.

"I thought you were gentlemen, travelling," said the captain, bowing sideways.

The Timothys and the policemen, the latter in their great excitement forgetting they had no authority to act under the warrant they bore beyond the limits of the state, rushed on board the first boat they came to that was ready to go over the river. By this time the Dido was entering the canal cut through the island. But our party were soon upon her track, and had no doubt they would catch the fugitives in Camden. When they entered the canal, however, they were delighted to find they were gaining rapidly on the Dido. No wonder, for she was aground. The Tims gave vent to a feeling of exultation, and drew the policemen to the forward part of the boat, with the intention of boarding the Dido when the vessels came together. Unfortunately, when the old State Rights, upon which they were crossing, approached within a few paces of the

Dido, the swell of the water floated off the latter, and she went bounding on her way. Then, in turn, the State Rights got aground, and did not succeed in getting off until the Dido reached her wharf.

Mallex and Fawner bowed in the most approved manner to Persever and his second as they passed out of the boat. The carriage in which the former sat was driven slowly out on the Haddonfield road, while the others followed on foot, having omitted hiring a carriage. They attracted no attention, no suspicion whatever, on the part of the citizens, and everything seemed in a fair way of being smoothly and quietly accomplished to their entire satisfaction.

The first grove they came to which offered a shelter and place of comparative seclusion, was not more than a mile distant. Here they halted, and measured the ground. The distance was ten paces.

Fawner exhibited his admirable skill. They were to fire in a line with a fence running east and west which was the boundary between the different owners of the land, and the choice of positions was won for Mallex. The opposite party had never been engaged in such a business before, and were perfect novices. Of course Fawner placed his principal at the west end of the line with the sun on his back and in the faces of the other party. A few minutes more, without interruption, and the affair would have been over.

But the Tims and the Dogberrys were not idle. Their excitement and vociferations drew a crowd about them in the bustling village; and when they made their object known, and described the parties they were in pursuit of, who had been seen so recently to pass from the boat, a general hue and cry ensued, and more than twenty men and boys, besides a number of dogs, joined in the pursuit, and they were actually in sight of the duellists when they entered the grove. So great was the tumult made by the pursuers, that every animal in the pastures fled before them. Cows, sheep, horses and asses, bounded over the earth in dire affright; and all seemed to take the direction of the duellists. Of the men, the Tims were in the foremost rank, being hardy farmers and accustomed to active

exercise in the field. The dogs barked, the cows lowed, the horses neighed, the geese gabbled and the asses brayed. One of the latter, a famous jack from the south, leaped over the fence which had separated him from the rest, and headed the flying drove, braying loudly at every leap.

It was just when the word was about to be given by Fawner, who had won everything with the two-faced coin his principal had furnished him, that the gigantic jackass sprang upon the ground in their midst and ran over the infuriated banker. The corpulent combatant lay sprawling in the dust, lamed and bruised from the mad blows of the vile beast's hoofs.

As soon as Ned could perceive through the dust and the no less blinding effects of the horizontal rays of the sun, the posture of Mallex, he advanced towards the prostrate man to ascertain what might be the effect of the unlooked-for interruption.

Meantime the astonished animal, still braying vociferously, diverged to the right, and issued from the grove, followed by the whole army of quadrupeds, just when the two Tims entered it; and the rest of the pursuing bipeds followed the ass into the next grove, never supposing that they were turning away from the duellists, and much less that one of them had fallen.

The Tims reached the wounded man, who was endeavouring to rise, assisted by Fawner, just when Ned came up.

"Oh, Ned, I've got you!" cried Tim, throwing his arms around our hero, lifting him up, and striving to bear him away from the place, as he had done some years before, when Ned was but a child.

"Nonsense, Tim! Unhand me, sir!"

"I won't, by jingo! You shan't fight. He shall kill me first. It'll run Susan distracted!"

"I am not here to fight. Mr. Persever is the one who came hither for that purpose. Now release me, or I shall be angry!"

Tim did as he requested, but reluctantly; and they both turned towards Mallex.

"Help me lift him," said Fawner, addressing Timothy.

"Is he killed? I'll do it if he's a dead man," said the farmer.

"Friend, if I were dead, I would not need your assistance!" said Mallex, with difficulty, and in great pain.

"And from what I've larned about your wicked doings, you don't deserve it while you're alive."

"Help me!" repeated Fawner. "You see I am old and weak. His ancle is twisted and he can't walk."

"Is he shot in the ancle? is that all?"

"No! no! The jackass ran over him. There has been no shooting."

"Ha! ha! ha! I believe it must've been some kin to my brother's jack," said Timothy. "My brother Thistle Hay, who lives in Maryland, near Bladensburg, used to have a jack that ran at everybody who carried a pistol. He knocked old Col. Vanderbomb down once; and Thistle says more than a dozen great men have been run over on the field of honour by jackasses?"

"I do not want *your* aid, sir!" said the suffering man, seeing Ned approach.

Ned turned away in silence, and rejoined his principal, to whom he conveyed the intelligence that the affair had, in all probability, reached a termination for the present.

The good nature of Timothy was at length roused by the appeals of Fawner. It may have been pity for the poor old debilitated clerk, rather than sympathy for the fallen banker. He assisted in bearing the suffering man to his carriage, where he desired to be taken.

"What is your name?" asked Mallex, turning to the countryman, when lifted into his vehicle.

"Timothy," said he, showing his faultless array of teeth, as he always did when his name was asked.

"Timothy what?"

"Timothy Hay."

"Mr. Hay," continued Mallex, "the observation made by your brother at Bladensburg, had much truth in it. On the field of honour a giant in intellect is liable to be prostrated by a jackass. Fawner, say to the asses waiting yonder that I'm going home. When I desire to meet them again, I shall let them know it. Tell them, if they are wise, they will not refer to the manner of my overthrow. If Persever says an ass did it, the people will examine his ears."

Fawner did his principal's bidding; and then taking the reins, he turned towards the ferry, and drove rapidly. In the street, and on the boat, many curious eyes were directed towards the half recumbent banker, whose groans and contortions warranted the belief that he had been wounded. When the boat reached the wharf at the foot of Walnut street, and the carriage entered the city, Fawner, in obedience to the wounded man's order, drove directly to Dr. Castor's office, where a message was left on the slate. Then without delay, they whipped out of the city, and never paused until they were under the shelter of the banker's country house.

The ancle of Mallex was not dislocated, for he was able to drag himself up to the library without the assistance of Fawner. From the expression of his eyes, his dishevelled hair, his attitude and gestures, when propped up by cushions, one might have concluded that he had been more severely wounded in his feelings than corporeally by the heels of the ass.

And poor old Fawner sat humiliated and disconsolate at his side. He regretted that the affair should have found so ridiculous a termination; that it had been necessary to appeal to arms at all; and, above all, that he had been constrained to participate on so painful an occasion. Such were the silent and incoherent reflections of the second, while the principal was growling out deep and bitter curses.

"No matter!" at length exclaimed the demagogue, placing his foot upon a number of letters and addresses from members of the nominating convention. "Cheer up, my friend, although overthrown by an ass, I shall triumph over human opposition. All the curious interrogators will be answered when it is whispered that I have had a meeting with my calumniator; and I shall have the sympathy of the constituency when it is surmised from the visits of the doctor, who shall come daily to see me until the convention meets, that I have been wounded on the field of honour.

"I hope so, sir," said Fawner, lugubriously; "and if it should meet your approbation, sir, it would be a great gratification to me if it were not known that I had any part

in the transaction. We have a censorious and back-biting congregation, sir,—”

“Pooh, Fawner, no one will ever suspect you!” exclaimed Mallex, with a faint smile. “I employed you because I knew no one would ever suppose it possible for such a person to act in such a capacity. No doubt some of my enemies in the district would prosecute me for sending a challenge, if they could procure the requisite evidence to convict me. They will never summon you as a witness. My mind comprehended everything—but the inconceivable interlude of the ass—before my plan was put in execution. Rouse up, man! If I go to Congress, that will be only one step. I will ascend higher, and you shall share the benefits. The government will want money, and the secretary can favour the bidders. Such things as taking loans for millions have been done by capitalists without advancing a dollar. The secretary has only to furnish memoranda of the amounts he will require per month, and entrust the bonds to the fortunate bidder to dispose of them in the market. These generally bring from five to ten per cent. advance on the original bids, and thus the government is supplied, and individuals enriched without the danger of loss, and without the necessity of furnishing bona fide capital. A little management and the good graces of the secretary have accomplished great results. Don’t you observe that if the original bids—and the successful ones—should be low, about par, and afterwards the bonds rise to twenty per cent. above it, that the credit of the government is vindicated, and the fame of the secretary expanded?”

“You are a great man, sir!” said Fawner, emphatically. “They cannot keep you out of Congress. And you might even be made the secretary—”

“It is probable, Fawner—quite probable—as worse men, and weaker ones, have sometimes occupied the chief seats in the departments. I aspire to the highest pitch—to the presidency itself, perhaps! You shall be my confidential adviser. Be prudent. Ah! yonder comes Dr. Castor. Leave me now, and resume your post in the office. I will instruct Castor what to reply to the thousand questions that will be asked him to-morrow. Here I intend to remain until the nomination is made. Bring me all the intelligence,

of whatever nature you can glean, every afternoon. Take my carriage. Use it as your own. Command my servants in the city, and write daily as instructed to Bainton during his absence. Good-night."

The departure of Fawner was followed by the entrance of Dr. Castor.

"It is not a *grave* case, doctor," said Mallex, observing the serious concern depicted in the face of the professor.

"I am very glad of it," said the doctor, taking the chair which Fawner had occupied. "Where are you hurt?"

"In the abdomen, on the shoulder, about the left ancle, and——"

"Bless me! did you use shot-guns?"

"Shot-guns? No. I do not speak of gun-shot wounds. But bruises, merely bruises."

"Why, it is rumoured that you have been shot down in a duel."

"Dr. Castor, I beg you will not contradict the rumour either by word or look. But it is not true. I have, I may say to you in confidence, been engaged in such an affair; but no blood has been spilled. My injuries proceed from being thrown by a horse, and then kicked by his horny hoofs."

"Ah, indeed! Not likely to be mortal, then. But contusions are not without danger, especially when upon the abdomen of a corpulent man. You must be kept quiet. Can you make up your mind to undergo some little confinement?"

"Yes, sir. I give you a week to cure me in, provided you give no medicine——"

"External applications and diet may do, since you can sit up and make such stipulations. Talking, however, should be avoided; and I will not even desire you to tell me any of the particulars of the affair you hinted at."

Mallex had no intention of making any further revelation; and so he began to complain of pains and stiffness, and encouraged the doctor to prescribe for him. He groaned as if in agony, and prostrated himself on the couch. The doctor rang for the house-keeper, directed that the remedies he prescribed should be applied without delay, and then left his patient.

When the house-keeper made her appearance in the library the second time with her poultices and ointments, she was surprised to find her master standing at the window, attracted by the friendly bark of the watch-dog, who seemed to be welcoming the approach of some familiar visitor.

"It is Tom!" said Mallex, unconscious of the noiseless approach of the old nurse.

"Yes, sir," said she, "Towser always barks that way when Tom comes."

"Hah! I did not know you were back so soon, Mrs. Carpenter. Put down your poultices. I am better now. Leave them for me to apply when they are needed. Have you been in the east wing of the house lately?"

"Lately? No, sir! Not for twelve months. Not since you told me it had snakes in it, that came up the creeping vines on the outside wall and got through the windows. Nobody goes to that side of the house but Tom, and he says he don't mind the snakes."

"Very well. There is no necessity for you to go there. Tom will be bitten some day if he is not careful."

"La, sir! He even feeds 'em!"

"A strange boy—a strange boy! I hear him now. Send him to me."

Mrs. Carpenter retired to obey him. A moment after Tom came in, betraying all the symptoms of excessive agitation.

"Ha! ha! ha! Tom! You've heard the news. I see it in your face."

"I have, indeed, sir. But there must have been some exaggeration. They say you were shot through the body. That must be a mistake."

"Of course it is. But you must undeceive no one for a week. I am not hurt, save a few bruises, the pain from which is nearly gone already. The doctor has been here and left a list of remedies, which I shall throw out of the window."

"But did you not fight?"

"No. I intended to wing the rascally lawyer, but in the act of firing was trampled down by a jackass. Then I changed my mind, for while lying in the dust it occurred

to me that enough had been done to fill the trumpet of Dame Rumour, and secure my election. That's all."

"I'm very glad of it, sir!"

"Oh, I'm a hero, sir. Persever is too wise a lawyer to contradict the gossips, and by denying or admitting anything endanger himself. Where have you been to-day?"

"Selling the horse and buggy over in Jersey. I got two hundred dollars."

"Put them with the rest you have in the savings institution. Now bring the light and let us see how our prisoner comes on."

They proceeded together to the dark room. When the ponderous door was unfastened, and the rays of the lamp illuminated the sombre recesses of the dungeon, they beheld the miserable old woman in a kneeling posture, with her hands joined together, thus making an humble appeal to the bad man for mercy. She was now quite sober, and fully realized the fact that she was completely in the power of the one she had hitherto delighted in tormenting.

"I hope you are quite well, madam," said Mallex, "and that you are pleased with the country mansion you had so long fixed your heart upon."

"Marcy!" said the unhappy old criminal; "have pity on me, and let me go. I'll never trouble you again! Only let me out of this place, and you shall never hear of me or see me again." And as she spoke her repulsive head seemed to vibrate more frightfully than it had ever done before.

"I cannot take your word, and you cannot give me security," said Mallex.

"I'll give you back all the money I have left! Only let me out, and you may send me to New York, or even all the way to Californy."

"No. Here you must remain, until death or derangement shall put it out of your power to harm me. Your fate is the result of your own folly, and your greatest punishment will be the reflection that you *would not* be satisfied with the reward I was willing to accord you. Good night, old lady. You see I am master in my own house!" Saying this, Mallex and Tom withdrew and secured the door.

They returned to the library, and Mallex resumed his reclining posture on the couch.

"Tom," said he, "rub some laudanum on my ankle and sides. I am bruised somewhat severely, but will be well in a day or two."

"I hope so, sir," replied Tom, doing his father's bidding. "And I think it is better for the affair to terminate thus, than for you to have killed Mr. Persever."

"Perhaps so. But it would have been better for you, Tom, if I had been killed by him. It would have been an honourable death, for the father of the moral, and accomplished, and handsome heir——"

"No such thing has entered my mind, sir. No, sir, I am not handsome. I have no visions of future pleasure, unless it be in heaven."

"Heaven! Go to bed, sir! I'll sleep here," growled the guilty man, burying his face in the cushions. He dreamed of triumphs, and enjoyed the savage satisfaction of circumventing or triumphing over his enemies. It is not true that the guilty are always the victims of remorse.



CHAPTER XXX.

THE YOUNG POET AND THE NOVELIST.

MR. PERSEVER and Ned, accompanied by the two Tims, returned from the grove to Camden. As they passed along the streets they could not avoid observing that many curious eyes were bent upon them. But as the main party of pursuers had not yet returned, those who were informed of the unlawful purpose of the parties very naturally supposed that the hostile meeting had been prevented, and hence they permitted our hero and his friend (it being understood that the former was to have been a principal) to pass without molestation.

Persever, however, thought that inasmuch as the affair had obtained such great publicity, it might be different in

the city. And so, after entrusting a note with a friend whom he chanced to meet at one of the hotels, to be delivered to his wife, he declared his intention to return with Ned to Summerton. The proposition was gladly received; and Tim, when it was explained to him that both Ned and Persever were particularly liable to be arrested in the state where the challenge had been accepted, offered his house as a secure asylum. Timothy likewise volunteered his assistance in enabling Tim's friends to elude the officers of justice, should they track them into his neighbourhood.

Persever thanked them both very heartily, and intimated that he might have need of their services. He was determined to remain away from the city at all events for a few days, until the excitement should subside. He had bitter enemies in his own profession, men who had not met with the same degree of success which had rewarded his exertions, and he entertained apprehensions that they might be incited by their envy to avail themselves of an opportunity to aim a destructive blow at him.

They arrived at Summerton just in time for tea, and made Susan very happy to see Ned alive and well, for simultaneously with their arrival came the news of the duel. It had been spoken of by the conductors, and thence expanded through the village; and our hero might have been irretrievably disgraced in the community, had not some of the inhabitants been natives of the sunny South, and bravely defended his conduct on the ground of great provocation and exasperating injury. Among those who desired at least a suspension of opinion until all the circumstances were made known, were some high-toned ladies who had daughters at the Hall. They did not justify Ned—all still supposing it to be our hero who had fought, and who had wounded Mallex, for so the rumour ran—and they did not hesitate to condemn the practice of duelling; but still they desired that everything which might be said in his favour should be heard.

Susan had no reproaches to utter, being all joy that the affair was over, and Ned had escaped. Ned and Persever had agreed to answer no questions on the subject, and requested Susan not to ask them any. The Tims were enjoined to pursue the same line of policy. But groups of

men and boys at the corners would discuss no other subject; and as the excitement seemed to increase, Mr. Persever accepted Tim's invitation at once, and accompanied him to the farm-house, about a mile beyond the limits of the ancient town.

It was a joyful occasion for Tim and Timothy, who occupied adjoining farms, and from one to the other it was the purpose of the lawyer to alternate. They had never entertained so distinguished a guest before, and would have defended him with their lives against all the requisitions that all the governors in the Union might have issued for his apprehension.

Ned resolved to find an asylum with his friend Charles Montague, at the lowly dwelling of Mrs. Kale. No entreaties could induce him to seek a shelter elsewhere; and Persever acquiesced in the separation from his friend the more readily, because it was his intention to send Tim for his family and remain a few weeks in the country, where many of the voluminous documents incident to his profession could be prepared as well as in his own office.

The stars were blinking merrily in the western sky when Ned approached the humble dwelling of the widow Kale. The night-hawk darted down to the path before him in quest of the fire-fly. On the chimney-top was perched the whippoorwill, which the widow said had been his haunt at that season for many years.

It was with a heartfelt alacrity that Charles sprang forward to welcome his friend into the little white-washed parlour embowered with honeysuckles and roses, and there they were left alone by the poor widow, who toiled night and day to make everything about the premises wear so charming an appearance.

But although Montague evinced so much unaffected delight in his salutations, a single moment sufficed for him to discover the cast of sadness on the brow of his friend. Charles gazed in pain and wonder. He had not heard of the attempted duel, having, as usual, purposely avoided learning the subject of the last rumours. The topics which interested the multitude generally had no charms for him. His was a separate and loftier existence.

"Ned," said Montague, "you left me abruptly, or rather

left the town uncourteously, which, however, might be the result of a sudden necessity. But still I supposed your friend was entitled to a note—a short one—previous to your departure. Remember, we were to have two hearts, but only one breast. Every palpitation of the one was to be felt by the other, and thus we were to be rendered mutually happy. Yes, happy, even in pain, in misfortune, in hopeless disaster itself—for such is the power of sympathizing hearts, even when all the woes of earth are heaped in accumulation upon them !”

“True, Charles. Forgive your friend ! Pardon my weakness. The chord you have touched has vibrated through my soul, and expelled these tears. Oh, how soothing it is to melt in tears when the heart, however much it may be oppressed by the inflictions of the world, is yet conscious of never having harbored an unworthy motive, of never having meditated a cruel wrong ! Yes, we will have but one bosom. We will confide everything to each other. We will dwell together. We will work together, if you will permit me to assist you with my pen. We will hope together, and suffer, if such must be our lot, in sympathy. Charles ! since I saw you last, I have learned from her own lips—from Alice’s own lips—that it would be incompatible—injurious to her position and prospects—yea, a violation of filial duty—any longer to encourage—”

“Oh, Ned ! say no more ! Spare yourself the painful utterance ! I know what you would say, and I know the cause. Fashion and riches—the vain pomps of the world—have in this instance, as in millions of others, triumphed over a weak and tender heart. The butterflies may perish at the end of a brief season—the anxieties and triumphs of a few fleeting years may be, will be forgotten forever ; and then sombre regret will brood in solemn gloom over the hours wasted, the opportunities neglected, until the tomb shall engulf all that remains of poor, silly humanity ! Then the same career will be run by the succeeding generation of the devotees of the hour, with the same dismal result. It has been so, and will continue to be so, with the rich and fashionable. They are forgotten the moment they vanish from the stage. Their tombs are not visited, their names are not repeated, and they sink into eternal oblivion.

How different will it be with *us*, the poor, the despised, the oppressed. Yes, Ned, God has implanted the immortal spark in our bosoms. Our songs may be contemned by those who determine not to listen to them and appreciate them, because they are swayed by envious motives; but they will reverberate after we are gone, and like Eolian strains, find utterance in every generous heart, over which shall sigh the gentle gales of heavenly passion! Yes, Ned! isolated by fortune from the tumults of the world, let us resolve to labour in the seclusion we have chosen, for the achievement of a distinction which no wealth can purchase, and no capricious smiles of beauty can destroy."

"Charles, I came hither for comfort, and have found it. No one else could have so completely soothed my wounded spirit. Yes, let us not put our trust in women! We may adore them at a distance, as we worship the stars: but unless we have equal fortune, as many friends, and as much influence as the enchantress we bow to, let us never attempt to establish intimate relations with them. Let us not listen to the music of their voices, gaze upon their siren smiles, or mark the delusive palpitations of their ensnaring hearts; and, above all, never build upon the fleeting foundations of their promises and pledges! I did intend to propose accompanying you to Mr. Bloomville's mansion, for the purpose of introducing you to Elgiva. But perhaps it would be best to gaze at a distance, to converse with her in your dreams. She is rich, and surrounded by so many powerful admirers, it is not to be presumed that her heart might be won by a poor poet—poor in purse, rich in genius——"

"Not so, Ned," said Charles, "but with sufficient of the Castalian afflatus, I hope, to make a successful effort to achieve something worthy of being preserved. Be it as you propose, with Elgiva. I have not supposed I could love her as others love who merely marry. I have dreamed of her as a bright spirit crowning me with the bays I had striven to win, and not as the drudging house-wife companion. No! I am indissolubly wedded to the bright object which has so long haunted my visions by day and by night, and which has guided my pen, and inspired my thoughts. But such a subsidiary has ever been needful in the rugged

ascent of the immortal heights. Mine could not be the vulgar love of the worldly-minded, nor yet the Platonic affection of the merely sentimental; but the passion to see a goddess in the object of my adoration, whose smile would roll away the dark storms of life, and make an eternal sunshine illumine my path—the path to FAME.”

“And your imagination can endue her with such attributes. She will not regard you with any the less favour, if I should fail to comply with her request.”

“Her request? Did she request it, Ned?”

“She did; merely, as she intimated, to enlarge still more the circle of her acquaintance.”

“Her slaves, perhaps!”

“No; I think not. Fortified as you are, and forewarned by my fate, there might be no danger. I will, after all, the first opportunity, if you do not object, comply with her request. A closer inspection will not annihilate the deity of your dreams. I can conceive what a dark void must be in the breast of one who has no such bright object to cheer him in his reveries. Alas! henceforth such must be my condition. But, Charles, I have not yet listened to the brief sketch of your life which you promised me.”

It was not a singular tale in the annals of genius. His father, a rich planter, had been ruined by a rash speculation, and by becoming security for a friend, and soon after died. His mother had married again, and his stepfather, a merchant, refusing to defray the expenses of a collegiate education for his wife's son, then about half completed, offered him a situation in his store. Such employment being repugnant to one of his temperament, he refused, and was then unceremoniously turned adrift. The small sum his mother gave him at parting, and a hundred dollars in gold, the legacy of a deceased aunt, comprised his capital with which to begin the world. He arrived in Philadelphia, a perfect stranger. After engaging cheap boarding and lodging with a relative of Mrs. Kale, likewise in an indigent condition, he had set to work and completed a poem, on the subject of rural delights, upon which he had been long engaged in the south. This he fondly hoped would prove the first stepping-stone on the highway to fame and fortune. He had dreamed that treasure and honourable

distinction would follow the publication of his poem. So sanguine was he of achieving success, when he had placed the finishing touch to his production, that he was even tempted to depart slightly from the rule of economy he had previously adopted. Every one of the friends he had acquired who read the poem, praised it—and among these was a distinguished clergyman and Mrs. M——, a talented actress. And he was perfectly happy up to the time that he had his first interview with a publisher. The first one he waited upon declined peremptorily to have anything to do with poetry. The second would not undertake to publish the best poetry that ever was written, provided the author's name were unknown. The third was merely a bookseller, and not a publisher; but he was willing to have his imprint on the title-page, and to sell the volume, if the author would have it printed at his own expense. But none of the three desired to see more of the manuscript than the title.

“When I returned to my lodgings,” continued Montagne, “with my manuscript in my hand, and reflected that the product of so many months of mingled labour, pain, anxiety, and hope, had not received even the poor compliment of a perusal by a publisher, my disappointment and mortification were sufficient to overwhelm any one not *determined* to persist in a career of literature. But I was resolved that my poem should be published; and so, after a restless night, I agreed to defray the expense, and take all the risk myself.

“It was done; my purse was exhausted; and still some demands were not satisfied. There were a few kind and encouraging notices of the volume in the papers; and I hoped, while I absented myself from the bookseller's store, that it was selling briskly. It was more than a month before I inquired how many copies had been sold. Judge of my consternation, when I learned that only three of my books had been called for! But, Ned, that poem *will* be read! and I confidently bide my time.

“I had, however, attracted the attention of the publisher of a weekly literary paper, with whom I soon became acquainted, and for whom I am at present engaged writing his brief reviews of new books. You are now in

possession of the first chapter of my history, which includes the events of my life up to the present time. The occurrences hereafter you will, I hope, witness as they transpire."

Charles had perused only Ned's sonnets, and other brief poetic effusions; and our hero, in return for the confidence reposed in him, related how he had attempted to negotiate for the publication of his romance; how he had failed in the attempt; and then, almost despairing, had sent the manuscript to the publisher of a hebdomadal sheet.

The reading of the young men had made them familiar with the struggles and difficulties of authors, and they were not only enabled to soothe and comfort each other under the disappointments they had experienced, but to form fresh resolutions for the future, under the tacit pledge of mutual co-operation, inspired by a consciousness of the possession of genius, such as might surmount every obstacle.

The young friends lingered long after Mrs. Kale had retired to her humble couch. The recent brief separation seemed like an age to them, and they were reluctant to part, even for a few hours, and when they were to occupy contiguous chambers.

Their arms interlocked, they promenaded to and fro across the diminutive yard in front of the cottage, and gazed with throbbing hearts at the distant stars. If it occurred to them that the consummation of their cherished hopes must be in the distant future, yet they felt an inspiring conviction, that whenever attained, the prize would be as unfading as the glittering orbs they gazed upon.

"They tell me," said Ned, "that I have genius, the creative faculty, and that I should employ it on some *useful* work, in contradistinction to poetry and romance. Several subjects have been proposed to me—science, history, travels. But, Charles, what are the works that have lived the longest, and afforded the most benefit to mankind? Every new history supersedes an old one, every new discovery or improvement in science annihilates previous theories, and each successive traveller goes beyond his predecessors!"

"Human nature, alone, remains the same!" said Charles.

"The passions of mankind are the same now that they ever were; and he who describes them truly, under all the circumstances in which his characters may be placed, will touch responsive chords in the breasts of all readers, of all generations."

"True, Charles. The oldest uninspired book known to exist, is the Iliad. The name which has survived the longest, is that of a poet. And in every nation, while the poet and the novelist may be regarded by the *savans* as entitled merely to a secondary consideration, it so happens that their productions in almost every library are the most frequently consulted, and their thoughts and expressions the most highly valued. Shakspeare has afforded more delight and instruction to mankind than any author that ever existed. Scott has been read more than all the philosophers, historians, economists, and statesmen *en masse* of his generation."

"Yes, Ned. And I venture to say that any intelligent man being desired to name twenty authors as they may occur to his mind, it will be found that three-fourths of them are poets and novelists. Bacon and Newton were not technically authors—they were discoverers, inventors, and philosophers, like our Franklins, Fultons, and Moses. They were very great men, and deserved the immortality they achieved. So was Alexander great, and Marlborough, Wellington, our Washington, Hamilton, Clay—but none of them were authors."

In this manner did the young poets commingle their thoughts until midnight, when they reluctantly separated until morning. The katy-did and the cricket chirped on the vine-clad and rose-scented walls, and the notes of the whippoorwill, perched on the chimney-top, were the last sounds that greeted their ears.

CHAPTER XXXI.

COUNTRY LODGINGS—A DISCOVERY.

PERSEVER was soon joined by his family, and during their brief residence in the country, life seemed sweeter to them than it had done at the same season in the city. The rising lawyer resolved, as soon as he had accumulated a sufficiency of wealth, to spend all his summers upon a small farm of his own; and his wife and children were already eloquent in their descriptions of the fruits and flowers they would have.

It would not, perhaps, be an exaggeration to say, that during the sojourn of the lawyer and his family at the humble abode of Tim and Betty, they never failed to sit down to a table more bountifully supplied with the things which their appetites most coveted, than they had ever been accustomed to elsewhere. Not only everything desirable, which Tim's and Betty's industry produced, but the entire range of rich and fresh delicacies that the moderate domain of Timothy Hay yielded, were brought forward in profusion, and imposed, without price, on the guests from the city. The only drawback to Persever's enjoyment, if indeed anything could detract from it, was the well-meaning but untiring zeal of Tim in exhibiting his fields, his crops, his cattle, his fowls, his fruits, etc. He had delighted followers and auditors in the children; but the father sometimes was reluctant to abandon his books and pleas, merely to admire the running brooks and growing peas.

One morning, when Ned and Charles were sitting with Persever around a table filled with books, time-stained parchments, and other insignia of the legal profession, they beheld Tim and Timothy approaching the house, with evidences of satisfaction in their faces.

"Now we shall be interrupted," said Persever. "Tim is coming to show me something; his pigs or chickens, I suppose."

"Oh, no!" said Ned, much interested in the subject

they had been discussing. "I will dispose of Tim. Let me put him off."

"But they have evidently been preparing a sight for us, and it would be cruel to disappoint them. Timothy Hay, you see, is with him. He is the happiest man I know. Honest, industrious, and always smiling. Why don't you poets immortalize such characters, as they did in old times, in their pastorals? We have no pastoral poets! Give us your 'wood-notes wild,' and we'll crown you with bays. That Timothy Hay could be made to afford a valuable lesson. Look at his rosy face, his merry eye, his smooth brow, his powerful chest, and his raven black hair, while, no doubt, his age is not less than forty. Ah, boys! the happy nature which enjoys the sweets of life, and avoids its bitterness, is, after all, the best of treasures. That man is the true philosopher without knowing it. His innocent merriment is the talisman that unwinds the yarn of existence which reeling time would bring to an end. Age don't affect him. His is a perennial youth. But here they are."

"Come, gentlemen, if you please," said Tim, timidly opening the door. "I'm werry anxious to show you Betty's calves. Neighbour Hay says they are worth looking at. They're in the orchard, close to the garden."

"We'll be there presently, Tim," said Ned; "as soon as we finish looking over some old documents we have here."

"In the meantime, Tim," said Persever, "you can get Mrs. Persever to examine the calves. She's quite as good a judge of such things as I am. But we will follow soon."

"Yes, sir. We'll wait for you in the orchard."

"Tim!" continued Persever, calling him back, after he had closed the door. "Tim, I have found some old letters and fragments of books in the closet here. Were they left in the house by the former occupant?"

"What! that old trash?" exclaimed Tim, stepping in, and pointing to the leaves of an old bible on the table, and the heavy and blackened lids that had once enclosed them.

"Yes; and the letters in the closet. directed to Susannah Meek."

"That old rubbish? No! I found 'em in an old oak box my mother used to have. Betty made me bring 'em up here. I was a-going to burn 'em once, but she hendered me. She said bank notes might 've been hid in 'em, but she couldn't find any. I would 've burnt 'em, if I'd a known what company we was to have here!"

"Then you would have done wrong. Never burn any document, written or printed, not of your own production. That's all, Tim," said Persever, "I wont detain you any longer from the calves."

"Mr. Persever!" said Ned, who had taken up the old lids of the bible, and had been reading the inscriptions written on the fly-leaves by different hands, "here is something which has made a thrill run through me. Look at that name!"

It was the name of "EDWARD PARKE," written in a plain round hand, with all the evidences of antiquity; and underneath were a few lines, as follows: "*Presented to his disobedient daughter Susannah, who married Hewling against his consent, and now desires assistance. May she find comfort in the truths this volume teaches.*"

"And here's the whole story!" exclaimed the quick-scented lawyer, opening the bunch of old leaves between the ending of the old and the beginning of the new testament. He read as follows:

"Susannah Hewling, daughter of Edward Parke, of Philadelphia, and formerly of Hungers' parish, Virginia, received this inestimable treasure as the only legacy from her father. She married the man her parent disliked—but she loved him, to wit: Wm. Hewling, of Summerton, in the Jerseys. She writes this in illness. She may die soon. And if so, she desires that this poor verse of her composing may be inscribed on her tombstone:

Farewell my husband, mother dear,
Of my dear children pray take care
Their souls I do to God commend,
Whose mercy lasts world without end.

In another hand was the following:

"Susannah, sole surviving child of Susannah and Wm.

Hewling, was married to Wm. Day, of Philadelphia, anno 1775.

In still a different hand, but likewise by a female, was the following :

"Mary, sole surviving child of Susannah and Wm. Day, was married to Richard Meek, of Philadelphia, in 1810. It is now 1820, and I am a widow, with one child, my poor Susan. I am sinking under an incurable disease, and the doctor promises nothing. Although very poor, in consequence of the disobedience of my grandmother, we have rich relatives in the city, and if any of them should die without heirs, this record might be of use to my daughter. I shall leave it in the keeping of the faithful Margery Trudge, Susan's nurse."

"Stop, stop, Ned !" cried Persever, seizing the young man's wrists. "Be calm ; don't mingle any of your poetic ecstasies with matters of this sort. This is business for me ; and business and poetry never did prosper together. Don't be excited. Don't excite others. It will all amount to nothing perhaps. See how composed Montague is. He has the best nerves."

"But Susan ! Susan must know it ! Let me go to her !"

"No."

"Take Mr. Persever's advice, Ned," said Charles.

"Of course he will. He shall !" said Persever, smiling.

"Oh yes," said Ned, pale, though not trembling quite so violently as he had been doing a moment before. "But there can be no good reason for withholding this discovery from Susan."

"But there can be," said Persever. "If we can prove everything written here ; or if this record be received as evidence, then Susan gets the hundred thousand dollars, belonging to Daniel L. Parke. If the discovery gets wind, Bainton and Mallex may forestall us."

"It was not the fortune that excited me," said Ned, "but the joy, the felicity of knowing that Susan and I were relatives. Oh, merciful God ! I thank thee, that thou hast spared me one of my blood, and one so worthy to be loved and cherished ! To thee, Susan——"

"Go on," said Persever, interrupting him ; "the evidence

is sufficient for that. The circumstances furnish as conclusive proof of your consanguinity, as a marriage certificate does of the legitimacy of an heir. Go on, Ned; utter thanks to heaven, and praises of Susan. If she had been your mother she could not have loved you more tenderly. But don't defeat me. I am after five or ten thousand of that fortune for my own share, which I can't touch without you and Susan, or perhaps I ought to say Susan, get the balance."

"My noble, generous friend, I know you will succeed! It was for this purpose that a wise Providence directed everything. Hereafter I shall rely upon Him, who created and directs all things, to vindicate my cause, and remedy the evils I may suffer, never again presuming to take the remedy in my own hands. Such was the injunction I received this very morning from the lips of the venerated president of the college. Little did I then suppose that I should so soon have such a convincing demonstration of the verity and wisdom of his parental instruction."

"Mr. Perseverance—Mrs. P. says that ain't it—it's *Persevere*—Mr. Persevere!" continued Tim, opening the door.

"Well, Tim, I *am* persevering," said the lawyer.

"That's it, too. Mrs. P. sent me back to know what Mr. Persevere was persevering in, and why he don't come out and see Betty's fine calves.

"I'll come—we'll all come and look at them. Timothy Hay says they are the largest in the country for their age."

"And Timothy Hay has invited Mrs. P. and all o' you over to his place to see his clover field and his shangys; and Mrs. P. says she'll go."

"She may. But Tim, I have a favour to ask of you——"

"It's granted, Mr. Persevere! Now don't say any more about it."

"But you don't know what it is. I have found something in this old bible and in the letters which has interested me, and I want to borrow them——Not a word, Ned; turn your back to him," he added aside to our hero, who was about to utter something or other which might have betrayed his ill-suppressed perturbation.

"What! those old yaller letters, and that black bible with the stuffen spilt out? Is that the sort of favour you ask? Maybe you'll ask permission next to pick up some of the curled old shoe leather laying about the barn yard. Howsoever if you want these old trumpery things, jest take 'em and welcome. Why if you had asked for one of Betty's calves——"

"Thank you, Tim. We'll go with you, now. Lead the way to the orchard."

Charles was introduced to Mrs. Persever, who soon after asked Ned in a whisper if his friend was not in dreadful health. Ned said he was a poet and a student, which might account for his paleness. But Mrs. P. said it did not satisfactorily account for his cough. She admired his manners, his conversation, and was pleased to have met with him.

Of course the party praised the calves, and admired everything else that was shown them. To have done less would have evinced a lack of judgment, for every specimen was most admirable. Thus Tim and Betty were made very happy, and honest Timothy, from generous sympathy, participated in the delight.

When the inspection was over, Mrs. P. and the kind hearted farmer permitted Persever and Ned to depart for the village, on the plea of an engagement, on condition that Montague should remain and accompany them to the premises of Timothy Hay. The proposition was seconded by the poet himself, who became a voluntary hostage, pledged to remain until the return of the others.

As the thoughtful lawyer and his young friend were passing Susan's house, it was with difficulty that the latter could be restrained from going in.

"Don't stop, Ned. Let us go straight on to the old graveyard."

"I won't even utter a hint of this discovery," said Ned. "I merely desire to show her my face. Since that mournful interview at Lonsdale's mansion, she has not even seen me smile, and she suffers painful apprehensions on my account."

"No. I can't trust you. The change in your spirits, a more than ordinary pressure of the hand, without even a

hint at this business being uttered, may beget surmises, excite curiosity, and defeat our purpose. Let us first secure the prize—that is, prevent its escape—and then we may make open demonstrations. There are many things to be considered, much to be done, and perhaps more to be avoided. Come on. Cast no looks behind towards your aunt, as you call her, but she is, I suppose, a sort of cousin. Now, if her right be established, what becomes of your pretensions, both as regards your legitimacy and the fortune of John Parke deceased? Don't you see that her success is your defeat?"

"No matter! Only raise her to a condition of affluence and I will be satisfied. So that I am content with the manner of my derivation I care not what the world may think. I ask nothing of the world on the score of my parentage. I will achieve fortune and win a good name by my own exertions and conduct. Only let me see Susan independent——"

"Of course, in that event, it would be hereafter as it has been heretofore, with Susan. You are her heir. Whatever is hers is yours."

"True, sir. If she were my mother, she could not be more careful of my welfare, or deeply interested in my success and happiness. But surely, if she is to be your client, you will have to get authority from her, before you can proceed in this business. And then she must be informed all about it. I know how happy the acquisition of fortune will make her. The first thought will be for Tim. He must be owner of the farm he cultivates. I know Susan's disposition. Her happiness will be derived from the anticipated enjoyment of others——"

"Ned, have you forgotten the fable in the spelling book, wherein a certain damsel let fall her bucket of milk? Don't let your thoughts have so free a rein. We must first think how this fortune is to be secured. It will be time enough to consider how it is to be expended after it is obtained. I must consult an older lawyer than myself. Everything must be weighed well and thoroughly considered before the first move is made. But here we are at the church-yard. I trust no one will suspect our object."

"You need not fear it, sir; how can they?"

"I don't know. But we must be circumspect. What a city of the dead! There is a dense population here!" said Persever, when they had reached the centre of the yard and stood surveying the marble monuments, slabs and perpendicular stones.

"Let us seek the darkest and oldest," said Ned. They did so. For more than an hour they were busily engaged reading the inscriptions on the moss-covered stones. Some of these precious mementos were nearly defaced by time, indicating either the extinction or the neglect of relations and friends in the vicinity. Others, again, although nearly one hundred and fifty years had elapsed since they were carved, remained quite as legible as they had ever been. Many a fresh sodded mound was strewn with flowers, or garlanded with roses.

"Here it is, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Persever, who had wandered a few paces away, seeing Ned had become pensive, and poetically meditative, forgetting in his distraction the object of their visit, and ceasing to search for old inscriptions.

"Is it possible?" cried Ned, aroused from his reverie.

"It is as plain as the nose on your face, which is certainly long enough to be distinguished by almost any eyes under the age of ninety."

True enough. The lines written in the old bible by Susannah Hewling were all there, near a clump of evergreen trees, which tastefully contributed to the peaceful seclusion of the place. Above the verses quoted was the following: "In memory of Susannah Hewling, who departed this life September ye 6 A. D., 1754, aged 28 years."

Ned gazed some moments in silence, swayed by the reflection that he stood near the dust of one of his own kindred. One who, like himself, had been abandoned by those to whom it was natural to look for protection; and who, in all probability, had suffered much in life and finally died of a broken heart.

"This is almost what we lawyers call a 'clincher,' Ned!" said Persever. "The links are well connected. This is the hook that fastens the chain to the parent stock. Hist! I hear some one in our vicinity," he continued, in a whisper.

"I know you! I know who you are!" cried a sweet little girl, of eight years, and niece of Elgiva, who burst from the hand that sought to withhold her in the embowering evergreens. She ran to Ned and seized his hand.

"Lily! you have surprised me," said Ned, caressing the beautiful child. "Surely you are not in the habit of visiting this place alone?"

"Oh, no, sir! I should be frightened to come here alone. My aunt came with me."

"I am discovered," said Elgiva, emerging from the trees; "but you must not suppose, Mr. Lorn, that I came hither to make discoveries or to be discovered. Once a week I visit the grave of a dear friend, who was a member of my class at the Hall."

Ned introduced Persever, and then the whole party turned in the direction of the grave Elgiva had referred to. It was fragrant with the perfume of flowers planted there by the fair hands of the surviving friend.

"You admire the buds and blossoms, gentlemen," said Elgiva, smiling sadly, while upon each of her long eyelashes trembled a crystal tear, like the pure dew drop of the morning, "but if you had seen and known the poor Viola, you would admit that no flower could compare with herself in the freshness of early bloom; and that the emblems of innocence I have strewn around her dust are but as the faint shadows of a once matchless, but alas! unsubstantial substance. She was too bright to live, too pure for earth. We were bosom friends. We had studied together, shared each other's hopes, joys and disappointments. We formed plans for the future, wherein we were not to be separated—but, alas! you see what was to be her fate. Yet, when lingering near her dust, it seems to me that the place is revisited by her spirit, and all the hallowed memories of our communings return to me."

Neither Persever nor Ned had manifested by a look or motion a desire to divert the thoughts of the fair mourner from the subject which afforded her a melancholy pleasure. As she spoke, she never ceased to strew the leaves of roses on the grave, and was unconscious of the interest she created in the eyes of her auditors. They could not avoid being struck with her perfectly symmetrical form, her grace-

ful attitude, her noble features, her fair face and snowy hands, as she cast the emblems of innocence upon the grave of the departed.

"Gentlemen," said she, when she ceased her accustomed tribute to the memory of her beloved friend, "I have made known to you the object of my pilgrimage hither, because I have been an involuntary listener to the words you uttered at yonder ancient headstone. You need not fear to trust me; or rather, you may rely upon my discretion. I believe I have some knowledge of the history of the poor wife and mother who lies beneath that sod. Broken-hearted, she died at an early age. She was the daughter of a wealthy gentleman, of an ancestor of yours, Mr. Lorn——"

"You could not have understood from the words I——" said Persever.

"No. I should not have understood you," said Elgiva, quickly, but for the tradition preserved in the memory of the wonderful Mrs. B——, who entertained me only last evening with narations of events that occurred many years ago."

"Mrs. B——! I have often heard of her extraordinary memory for one of her extreme age," said Persever, eager now for the fair mourner to pursue the subject.

Elgiva said she had been informed by Mrs. B. of many occurrences in connection with the marriage of the lady whose tombstone the gentleman had been examining. How the descendants of poor Susannah had struggled against ill fortune, while the members of the other branch of the family enjoyed all the blessings of prosperity until the deprivation of Edward——"

"Meaning me?" asked Ned.

"Yes, sir. The old lady says there can be no doubt that you are truly the last remaining male descendant of the father of the unfortunate Susannah. She has had Susan Mulvany to relate all she knows on the subject without disclosing her object, which only confirms her own opinion. And since her interview with Susan she believes, from certain coincidences, as well as the instincts which impelled Susan to act as she did, that she must be a descendant of the poor Susannah. But of this—too late I recollect it!—she warned

me not to speak, because, as she said, it might encourage hopes never to be realized."

"I am glad of it!" said Persever. "Miss Bloomville," he continued, "we have reason to believe that Mrs. B.'s conjectures are perfectly well founded. We have a chain of evidence, sufficient, in my mind, to establish the important fact in regard to Susan's descent from this Susannah. But extreme caution and profound secrecy will be requisite in taking our initiatory steps. I am glad we can rely with confidence on your discretion——"

"You may, sir," said Elgiva, smiling. "I cannot, certainly, sympathize with the adverse party, if there be such, who would seek to suppress the truth or oppose the cause of justice. Although an accidental confidant, Mr. Lorn," she added, smiling, "I think you may rely upon it that I shall not be disposed to assume the attitude of an enemy."

"I do rely upon it!" said Ned, warmly. "And more, I am happy in the confident belief that you will be my friend."

"You may believe so—trustfully believe so," said she, as they moved away slowly towards the church. "For," she continued, "if what I have learned be true, you have enemies enough, and dangerous ones too."

"You allude to the rumoured duel," said Persever. "I will tell you all about it—but, remember, it must likewise be strictly in confidence." He did so, and the young lady was surprised and pleased to learn that Ned had not fought at all, nor had he intended to fight. And she laughed heartily at the description of the termination of the affair.

When about to separate at the gate which led into the broad thoroughfare where the cars were thundering past, Elgiva, turning suddenly to Ned, reminded him that he had not yet brought his friend Charles Montague with him, to listen to her poor music.

"Not yet," said Ned; "but it is my intention to do so, if I can prevail on him to accompany me."

"Will it be so difficult?"

"It is probable. He is sensitive and difficult of access—he is young, poor like myself, and eccentric like other poets. Hence he declares it is a terror for him to meditate an encounter with—with——"

"Poor, fearful youth! But really, sir, when I look at that pale young man sitting in the church, I am reminded of Viola. There is a striking resemblance of feature——"

"Happy man!" said Persever, smiling. "What a powerful auxiliary he would have to plead——"

"You are thinking about gaining suits, sir, no doubt," she replied. "But I am thinking of grave matters. The young man not only resembles Viola in features and expression, but in the fatal malady, as it appears to me, which terminated her existence. His cough sounds precisely similar, and the flush that accompanies it is the same." She then called Lily, who had lingered, culling flowers, to her side, and bowing to the gentlemen, pursued her direction homewards.

"Mr. Persever," said Ned, as the two approached the residence of Susan, "she who is the most deeply interested in this matter; who watched over my helpless infancy; supported me, instructed me, guarded me——"

"Should be informed of everything," said Persever. "That's what you would say. I yield. She will not endanger the cause."



CHAPTER XXXII.

FREAKS OF BLOOD.

ALTHOUGH Ned had been with Susan that morning, and had breakfasted at the same table, his salutation, upon entering the house with Persever, after their visit to the church-yard, was so cordial, his features so animated, that his foster-mother was astonished. She sat a moment with her eyes fixed upon his open countenance, and then said: "Ned, what has happened? Something has occurred which greatly moves you. Language could not declare it more plainly than I see it depicted in your face. I have been so long accustomed to read your feelings, almost your thoughts, in the changes of your countenance, that it is impossible for me to be mistaken."

"Mother! Sister!" said Ned, "you have been both to me. And I had been nothing but for you! I thank God, there has been one spared me, who never ceased to feel an interest in my welfare, and who delighted to lessen all my miseries by sharing them. If there has been only one to truly sympathize——"

"Cease, Ned!" cried Susan, her tears suffusing her face. "Next to the salvation of my soul, the greatest object of my life has been, and ever will be, the promotion of your happiness. If you had been my own child, my affection could not have been greater. But you need not have acknowledged thus that you appreciate my poor endeavours. Your conduct has always been my reward. I know now what it is your intention to say. Tim prepared me to expect it. I did not suppose that one so gentle, so guileless, so confiding as she, could be so changed by the vain allurements of the world. But you must bear the infliction; and, always remember, that she who watched over your infancy, and has never yet been long separated from you, will still, with God's help, under any circumstances, no matter who may forsake or assail you, strive to assuage your grief, and administer all the comfort in her power until life be ended."

"You are mistaken for once, Susan," said he, smiling through his tears.

"How? I am so! You are not miserable because Alice has——What can it be? Tell me, Ned!"

Then Persever narrated the particulars of the discovery at Tim's house.

"Me?" cried Susan, embracing Ned, in the ungovernable tempest of her emotions. "Me? I have it? No! I'd scorn to take a cent of it. It is Ned's. It belongs to him, every cent of it. I thank thee, merciful Father! that he whom thou gavest me to guard and cherish, was of my own blood, of my own kin! What? take the money that belongs to you, Ned? I would rather starve——rather die, than do it! I won't have it, Mr. Persever!"

"Yes you will," said the lawyer, very calmly, "if you can get it."

"I won't! As heaven is my witness——"

"Stop, stop! You are going a little too fast. If you don't take it, there is a possibility that Ned will never enjoy any portion of it, and that I shall have no fee."

"What?"

"I say you must and shall get it, if you can; and I hope we will succeed."

"Then I'll give it all to Ned! I will——"

"That's another matter. I shall say nothing in opposition to that. Once yours, and in your possession, no earthly power can prevent you from doing what you please with it."

"But is it not Ned's, justly and——"

"I don't deny that; I think it is. But we are not discussing that point. Morally and religiously it is Ned's; but the law, I think, will give it to no one but you."

"Oh, the horrible and unjust law!"

"Don't abuse the law, Mrs. Mulvany. We expect great things from it. If it has its ugly features, it frowns grimly on all alike—on our adversaries, as well as upon us. But enough of this. It is my duty to warn you, but we may not be defeated in our purposes. Ned will explain why it is essential that our discovery be kept for the present a profound secret. The object is first to take such measures as effectually to prevent the escape of the prize. We may not be able to grasp it immediately—it may be years first—but when it is so surrounded and guarded at all points as must make it inevitably yours at some period, then capitalists will advance liberally, so that ammunition may not be wanting to carry on the war, and subsistence, too. It is a case of great magnitude and complication. The heir of Daniel Lorn Parke is likewise the heir of John Parke. But the indebtedness of Bainton and Mallex to the latter has been fortunately admitted by a formal acknowledgment, and upon the establishment of your claim the administrator must pay you; and then, knowing the evidences I hold to prove that a much larger sum is due the estate of John Parke, of course we must expect to encounter the determined and desperate opposition of the bankers. If we cannot recover both estates, at least an advantageous compromise may be effected. The greatest obstacle, it occurs to me, would be the virtual relinquishment on the part of Ned of his claim to legitimacy."

"And that I am prepared to do without hesitation," said Ned. "Ned Lorn sounds as well in my ears as Ned Lorn Parke."

"But don't I *know* that you are the son of John Parke?" exclaimed Susan.

"Of course you do, Susan. And that is all I care about. So you are satisfied, I care not a fig for the opinion of the world."

"Enough of this!" said Persever, rising. "I am now for action. Do you remain here, Ned, until I write for you. Send my family to the city by Tim and our friend Timothy Hay, when Mrs. P. becomes tired of the country. I shall leave Summerton this afternoon. Tell Mrs. P. that I don't run away from her this time to fight a duel, but to serve a client who will probably be able to pay a good fee. Mind not to intimate who that client is. Add to the message anything else you choose, and tell her not to permit the children to eat much fruit after the middle of the day. I shall sup this evening with H—— B——, if I am not mistaken in my calculations. Good bye."

When Susan and Ned accompanied Persever to the door, their attention was arrested by an altercation in the street, and a crowd of men and boys surrounding the disputants. Persever and Ned approached the scene of contention to learn the occasion of it.

"I want Mr. Persevere—I want Ned Lorn," was heard above all the voices.

"That is Tim!" said Ned.

"And there is Timothy Hay," said Persever, seeing a constable holding the honest farmer by the shoulder.

"What is the matter?" asked the lawyer, stepping within the circle surrounding the prisoner.

"Nothing, only we've been arresting a thief," said a strange ill-looking man, who seemed to be aiding the constable.

"It's an arrant untruth, as I promise to prove," said Timothy, smiling, and seemingly not at all distressed, although he spoke very loudly.

"It's a blasted lie!" said half a dozen men who could vouch for the farmer's innocence.

"Yes, it's a lie, and he knows it," said Tim, shaking his fist under the stranger's nose.

"What is he charged with having stolen?" asked both Persever and Ned.

"Yonder horse and buggy, and my mammy," said the stranger.

"And your mammy!" iterated the lawyer.

"Yes, sir. The other day, and it's the last time I've set eyes on my mammy, I saw her in this buggy, and pulled by this horse, going up — street in the city. I've been hunting for her ever sence, and to-day I eyed the buggy and horse out at this man's farm. The horse and buggy aint mine; and so I offered to leave them if he'd only give up my mammy."

This was followed by explosions of laughter, as every one knew that Timothy already had a fine buxom wife of his own.

"What do you think he wants with your mammy?" asked Persever.

"Why, to put her out of the way. He's been hired to do it."

"Who hired him? And what was the motive?"

"Who? Why it was——" Here Dick—for it was the old hag's son—paused. He was not quite clear that it would be good policy to disclose the name of Mallex, or to indicate the motive which might have induced the capture of his mother, whose enfranchisement and restoration he desired merely that he might share the money she usually received from the banker.

"You don't answer me, sir."

"And I won't. But I'll swear this man stole my mammy and the horse and buggy, and that will be enough to cage him."

"It will cage yourself, sir!" said the cashier of the Summerton Bank. "For it will be perjury. He did not steal the horse and buggy. He bought them, and gave a check on our bank, where he always has funds and credit."

"Didn't I tell you?" said Timothy, smiling.

"That's a impossible alleyby!" said Dick.

"I don't know what a alleyby is," said Timothy Hay; "but more than a dozen men saw me make the purchase, early the other morning, before I went to the city."

"Yes, I'll swear to that!" said Tim, and several others.

"And as to stealing his mammy," added Timothy, still smiling, "it's my opinion it couldn't be done with Kitty

Hay's consent, or without it, nother. I told 'em they were on a fool' arrent, and they'd only find a mare's nest."

"Mr. Hay," said the constable, releasing him, "I done only my duty."

"I know it. I don't think hard of you."

"Do you assert," asked Persever, "that you saw this man drive your mother away from the city in this buggy?"

"No, sir. I only saw my mammy in the buggy, but didn't get a sight of the driver."

"What pretext then could you have for causing his arrest? The property you admit was not yours, and you never saw him with your mother!"

"He's a fool!" cried several.

"Didn't I say Mr. Persevere would fix him?" cried Tim, exultingly.

"Who did you buy the horse and buggy from?" asked the puzzled Dick, unheeding the unfriendly glances and muttered threats of the farmer's friends.

"Of a humped-back little fellow about as high as my breeches pocket."

"You did? I know him!" exclaimed Dick, in a lively tone. "I'm on the right track, now. You are all right. I beg your pardon for hurting your feelings. You are free. I enter a nully-prosy-quay. You can travel, and so will I. Good day, I'm in a hurry."

"And you'd better be!" said several.

"Pause a moment!" said Ned, confronting him. "Have I not seen you before, and in this neighbourhood?"

Dick's chin fell when he gazed at the questioner. But a moment after he said: "Not as I knows on, but yander's the boat." He then moved briskly towards the steamboat landing, followed by Persever, who was quite as anxious as Dick Sutly to be in the city.

Ned rode into the country with the two Tims, to deliver his message to Mrs. Persever, and to rejoin his friend Montague.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS.

MR. B—— counselled Persever to consummate all his preliminary measures before imparting to the bankers the slightest intimation of his discovery. He approbated his junior's cautious conduct in emphatic terms, and with a bright and hopeful eye, declared that Susan must be ultimately successful. But he said it might be important to have the deposition of the aged widow at Summerton, spoken of by Elgiva. And he promised to procure it himself on his next visit to the village, where he was frequently in the habit of sojourning.

Days and weeks flew past without an open demonstration being attempted against the bankers. Persever wrote frequently to Ned, but not for him. He wrote, as he said, merely to keep the mind of his often disappointed young friend from being either too much elated or depressed, and to prepare him to bide his time in equable patience.

Mallex, before the announcement of his convalescence, had obtained the nomination. Dr. Castor, upright and honourable in principle, was yet one of those characters who take delight in the petty species of diplomacy, or deception, which may excite curious attention, and invest a trifling matter with the appearance of mystery and importance. Hence he could not be induced to indicate the nature of the wound under which his patient was suffering. He interdicted all visitors. The patient must be quiet and see nobody, until the crisis occurred. There might be danger. A few days would decide the fate of his rich friend. On the morning succeeding the day of nomination, the smiling doctor announced that the crisis was happily passed, and that his patient would be able to ride out and see his friends immediately. Nevertheless, Mallex was not entirely recovered. The marks of the ass's hoofs were still visible on his body, and he suffered more or less every hour in the day from the rude infliction.

Dick Sutly, upon his return from Summerton, had

hastened to the city mansion of the banker in quest of Tom Denny, who of course was not to be seen there, as he was then performing the part of jailor in the country. But Dick was not to be easily repulsed; and so he told the servant that he must see some one who could give him the information he wanted, or he would "kick up a row" at the door. This threat had the effect to cause the admission of Dick, and he was conducted to the apartment of Mr. Fawner, who was about to ride into the country to report the occurrences of the day to his august principal.

The old man sate in an easy chair, fashionably dressed, and wearing a patronizing expression of features. It is astonishingly true that no age or condition is exempt from the powerful influences of suddenly acquired power and riches. Fawner's compensation had been largely increased, and he had been more and more admitted into the confidence of his employer, who now placed him in the position of an intimate friend, rather than a dependent and an inferior, in their daily intercourse. And during Tom's absence, the old man was not only constituted the master of the city mansion, but the president *pro tem*, as Mallex expressed it, of the banking house.

Dick was dismissed by the old clerk with a promise to see him again that evening at nine o'clock. When Fawner reported the particulars of his interview with Dick, Mallex was exceedingly annoyed, and knew not exactly what to say or do. He did not like to disclose even to so facile an instrument as Fawner had proved to be, any of the particulars of his revolting crimes. He durst not venture that far. He had by imperceptible degrees made the old man's mind familiar with the practical operation of such vices as might be justified by a species of ingenious argument; but further than this he had not supposed it would be necessary to venture. But Mallex's mind was a capacious one, and fruitful in expedients. When he could not allege the existence of admitted facts as sufficient cause to produce the effect desired, he did not scruple to resort to plausible fabrication. And this he did on the present occasion. A very brief narration sufficed to convince Fawner that it would be both the part of wisdom and justice to conciliate Dick Sutly. And the employment he was to have, and his

compensation, were settled immediately. Of course the banker did not disclose the perilous fact that Dick's mother was in his custody, and at that very moment howling in the prison-room of the mansion he was then occupying.

When Fawner again saw Dick at the mansion in the city, he merely repeated the proposition which had been dictated by the banker. Dick pricked up his ears at the mention of sums quite as large as he had been in the habit of receiving from his scolding mother. Instantly he acceded to the terms, and as quickly relinquished his purpose to seek further intelligence in regard to the locality and circumstances of his parent. And as Fawner did not seem to be conversant with the precise nature of the transactions in which he and his mother had been engaged for the benefit of the banker, he had sufficient cautiousness not to allude to any of them.

The Lonsdales were sporting their gay costumes and rich jewels at the fashionable watering places. Alice was as gay as the rest, or seemed to be so; and was really an object of pride and admiration for Lonsdale and for her mother. Lonsdale, although he had made his fortune trading in merchandize, was, now that he possessed riches, becoming more and more a proud aristocrat, and boasted of a southern extraction. Official dignitaries, military and naval officers, and literary lions, received the homage of his admiration.

Eugene Bainton, restless under the yoke which had been finally imposed upon him, sought in vain for the repose of mind which he might have enjoyed by an entire severance from his iniquitous partner. How different would have been his condition if he had resolutely followed the monitions of his relenting conscience, and made a full and satisfactory restitution to the despoiled orphan! He was not constituted to be a villain, and although, from certain defects in his conformation, he might commit errors, under the influence of a cupidity which he had not a sufficient estimate of the obligations of moral right to resist, yet the sluggish sense of justice, which was not extinct in his bosom, would, at times, if not arrested by the more vigorous intellect of his partner, assert its claims to obedience. Surrendered up at last to the control of Mallex, whom he feared and de-

spised, there was no peace for him. He might smile with the gay, sport with the fashionable, and engage in the dissipations of the wealthy, but there was no rest for his troubled spirit when he returned at night to his silent couch. He was constantly in motion, traveling from city to city, and from the sea shore to the springs, in quest of an object which alas, can never be found, but in one's own breast !

The election was over, and Mallex was to be the representative of the one hundred thousand people residing in the——district. Now he was one of the great men. Many who had branded him as a scoundrel, and really believed him to be one, sought his company and bestowed their flatteries upon him. Of course he comprehended everything of that nature ; but he smiled none the less, and accepted their homage. His wealth, his new position, and the fact that he belonged or professed to belong to the party in power, made it obvious that the bestowal of much of the patronage of the government would be accorded to him ; and hence he was continually surrounded by a crowd of office-seekers and enterprising men in quest of lucrative contracts. A hint here, and something resembling a promise there, sufficed for the egregious sycophants, and increased the number of expectants at every successive levee of the great man, whose unvarying smile betokened the gratification he seemed to enjoy.

And that Mallex possessed an intellect of extraordinary vigour and activity, was attested by the fact that none of the minute details of the transactions occurring around him, in which he might be directly or remotely interested, escaped his observation. He had already achieved fortune and position by the energy of his mind, when opposed by all the dangers of the avenging hand of justice, and in despite of a thousand obstacles which would have deterred any common villain from the perilous pursuit. And ever vigilant, while guarding and obstructing all the avenues which might lead to his detection, he was at the same time not only amassing additional riches, but was ascending the ladder of political distinction with almost unequalled rapidity. All the gigantic transactions of the enormous capital his house could command were dictated by him to

his creature Fawner, with the unerring precision and inevitable result which attend the exact calculations of a great military genius. Of course he was insensible to the sufferings of others whose disasters, from the fluctuations in the financial world which he had himself originated, only contributed to increase his wealth and power. His agents and instruments were all dependent on his bounty, and the services allotted them to perform were arranged with such consummate ability, that no conflicts arose between them, while none of them comprehended fully the motive of the master. The tasks thus separately performed, when linked together, constituted an entire work which none but the genius that conceived it was permitted to survey in all its details.

He became familiar with the history of the government, and conversant with the principles of his party. These it was necessary for him to study for occasional *ad captandum* displays. But the most important knowledge, in his estimation, was to learn the characters, the virtues and vices, the secret motives and selfish desires, of those in authority who might aid him in the attainment of his own ambitious projects; and every opportunity was seized upon that promised to afford him such inestimable information.

He wrote ingenious and cheerful letters to his partner, and so skilfully did he dictate employment for his inert auxiliary, that the mere mechanical execution of the directions he imparted resulted, in various speculations, in the gain of many thousands of dollars. Such successes would be more likely than anything else to confirm his partner in the recently renewed resolve to accompany him farther in the career which had hitherto been so profitable.

By degrees he had completely overthrown the religion of Fawner. The temptation was too powerful for the poor old man's resistance. He had once tasted the sweets of wealth, and subsequently and for many long years, had drained the bitter dregs of destitution. And now when another glimmer of prosperity seemed to dawn upon him, in his old age, and when cupidity is said to culminate in the human breast, he could not permit any scruples of doctrine to interpose between him and the immediate attainment of his desires. He was henceforth qualified to practice deceptions, to offer and receive bribes, to commit usury,

to sacrifice a creditor, to circumvent a debtor, at the bidding of his employer. But the deeper and darker crimes were not entrusted to him. That would have been too hazardous an experiment.

Radley, too, treacherous and unprincipled as he was, could still be of use to the great man, and so his services were employed and paid for. Mallex knew precisely how far to impart to the burly lawyer his secrets, and that was just to the extent necessary to derive the benefit of his co-operation. If it was a crime, then Radley became, in his own parlance, *particeps criminis*, and nothing was to be apprehended from his disclosures. But in capital offences, the great man kept his own counsel, or only imparted it to the debased instruments which were to be employed in the execution.

Nor did the member elect relax his vigilant watchfulness over the movements of the friends of the two deceased Parkes, who were very generally his enemies, because it was the impression of most of them that both of the unfortunate brothers had been unjustly treated by the great bankers. Whenever Ned visited the city all his movements were watched and duly reported. Even the arrival of Susan, or of Tim, was noted by the one stationed at the wharf for that purpose. But Persever was the most feared, and subjected to the most incessant espionage. And had he not suspected this, and made it known that he had sealed and deposited in a place of security the documents brought by him from the west, as well as his own deposition, it might not have been conducive to his health to venture much in the open air without being accompanied by a friend. But Mallex was aware that in any enterprise he might meditate against this champion of the despoiled orphan, he would have to cope with a mind equal to his own in resources.

It so happened that the member elect was one day driving past the mansion of Mr. B——, just as Persever emerged from the door, attended by Mr. B—— himself, who wore a smile on his countenance, and before parting with his visitor shook him cordially by the hand. Mallex perceived that Persever had seen him, and that he had hastily averted his face, purposely to create a contrary impression.

The great man hastened without a moment's delay to the office of Radley, and demanded to know what could be the meaning of Persever's visits to the great legal adviser.

"It must be on the business of one of his clients, sir. We frequently consult the judgment of Mr. B——, and in cases of importance and difficulty we obtain his written opinion, which has to be paid for, I assure you. Persever must have a rich client."

"Of course he was consulting him," said Mallex, musing. "But it does not follow that his client must be rich. It may be a client who expects to be rich, and to be able to pay hereafter."

"I defy all the lawyers in creation to recover a dime for Ned Lorn while the certificate of Dr. Drastic is in existence," replied Radley, leaning back in his chair, and elevating his right hand.

"So it seems to me; and so, indeed, I have been informed this same great legal luminary has himself declared."

"Did Bainton procure his opinion?" asked Radley.

"No. But Persever did, a long time ago. I know not who paid for it, if his opinions are delivered only for money. But, Radley, I am not at ease in regard to these late consultations. I have reason to apprehend some new enterprise is in contemplation. Persever's actions to-day had a meaning—I allude to his attempt to make them appear meaningless, or without signification. I am not often deceived in my estimate of the import of the slightest glance or smallest gesture; and if his visit to-day to Mr. B—— did not have reference to some matter in which I am interested, then I shall not hesitate to confess I have been mistaken this time. Find it out, Radley, find out all about it—smell out all that's in the wind, and then come to me for a check proportionable in amount to the magnitude of the discovery. Good day, sir."

And when Mallex departed from the door, Radley turned back for his hat, intent upon finding, if possible, some traces of this newly started game.

Fortunately Persever espied Radley as he crossed the street and approached his office; for, if the latter had presented himself abruptly, the former, guarded as he was,

might have betrayed his fears by some involuntary motion which lawyers know so well how to interpret. As it was, Persever had time to adjust his features, although he was conscious of an internal trepidation, and of a sickening apprehension that the enemy had discovered the mine he was preparing in time to counteract it.

When Radley entered the office, he found Persever sitting with his back towards him, apparently absorbed with the subject of the plea or argument he was writing. He approached noiselessly, and presented himself suddenly before his professional antagonist, hoping to achieve some insight into his secret purpose by the expression of his face.

"Persever!" said he, "we want to know what is to be done with the assets of Daniel L. Parke?"

"Wait a moment, Radley," replied Persever, without lifting his eyes from the document he was writing. "Wait till I finish this paragraph, and finally adjust the old quarrel between John Doe and Richard Roe."

Radley flung himself upon a chair and picked up a newspaper, feeling that he had either been foiled by the cool self-possession of Persever, or else there could be nothing new in contemplation on the part of the adversary.

"Now, Radley, what is it about Parke's estate?" asked Persever, deliberately putting down the pen and leaning back in his chair.

"Why, we were fools to part with the money, and would like to have it back again, since it is not probable there are any heirs."

"But your men had no more right to it than Mr. John Doe there had to Richard Roe's lands."

"We had possession."

"Yes. But no *just* title."

"The administrator appointed by the court can recognize no *donatio causa mortis* in favour of your client——"

"There may be something better than that," said Persever, quickly, convinced it was Radley's object to obtain intelligence for his employers, and that they had learned something to induce the belief there might be a new scheme hatching against them.

"What else could you possibly allege?"

"Oh, I am not sure but we shall be able some day to establish *nuncupative will* in favour of Ned. His uncle was in the habit of speaking of him as his heir——"

"Uncle? Oh, if you can make it appear that the elder Parke was his uncle, we shall submit; and he will be the heir of his father likewise, without the necessity of a will."

"But, sir," said Persever, gravely, "you are aware that a *nuncupative will*, if once admitted, is quite as effectual without, as with the link of consanguinity. So Ned's illegitimacy, as you are in the habit of terming it, will have nothing whatever to do with the matter. And if he recovers the estate of D. L. Parke, of course that will include John Parke's also, for the former was undeniably the heir of the latter."

"And that has been the subject of your consultation with Mr. B——, has it?" exclaimed Radley, quite convinced that he had got upon the right scent, as he termed it.

"My consultations with Mr. B——? Oh, ay, certainly," continued Persever, but chagrined that his own conduct should have given rise to suspicions. "It is an important cause, and the highest authority should be consulted."

"Surely, Mr. B—— cannot suppose such a thing practicable, after such a lapse of time," said Radley, half abstractedly.

"You know nothing of the merits of *our side*, Radley, and certainly you cannot suppose me silly enough to make any particular revelations. You cannot know what new discoveries have been made, what new witnesses have come forward, or anything about it."

"No—no. Only keep up your fire, Persever, that's all I want. This business has more than once filled my purse, and I shall not quarrel with my bread and butter." Saying this, Radley departed, believing he had sounded the depths of the mystery with his intellectual plummet.

Persever, on the contrary, after some reflection, became fearful he had done wrong even in suggesting a false alarm. It might have the effect of putting the enemy on the alert, when it would be desirable to have them in an unsuspecting and unprepared condition. He arose and proceeded boldly and without hesitation to report what had taken place to Mr. B——.

Mr. B—— smiled, and reassured his junior. He said it was well the dogs should have a bone to gnaw; but it was likewise true that the canine species were generally less tractable, and were decidedly more dangerous over a bone than at any other time. Yet it would keep their ideas from wandering in other directions, so long as they were prepared for battle on that ground. "However," he continued, "we must not charge upon them while they show their teeth. We must wait until the M. C. goes to Washington." And so it was determined.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE YOUNG AUTHORS.

SUSAN and Ned had been well-advised not to expect to obtain possession of the fortune of D. L. Parke immediately, and to be prepared for long delays and possibly a final disappointment. And hence, when informed that no action would be attempted in the premises for several months, they were not painfully shocked by the intelligence. Of one thing the law's delays could not deprive them; and that was the inexpressible happiness of knowing they were united by the ties of kindred, and that the generous affection which had hitherto bound them together was to be henceforth an obligatory duty as well as the result of accident and inclination. Susan now considered the poor orphan as justly entitled to all the care and bounty she could bestow upon him; and he felt that she had additional claims to his respect and obedience.

But the few months which succeeded the events at Summerton already described, had not, for divers reasons, been a season of dulness and impatient inquietude to our hero. His romance was appearing weekly in the columns of the —— and he derived much satisfaction from the repeated assurances of the editor that the story was exciting considerable interest. As it had been stipulated that

Ned's name should not appear as the author, the editor had adopted a *nom de plume* for him, and the tale purported to have been written by "Mark Mayfield." Susan alone was entrusted with the secret, and Ned was delighted to watch the changes of her countenance as she pored over the successive numbers of the paper, now shedding a tear of pity, now bursting into hilarious laughter, and always praising the production. The author was not forgetful of the fact that this was likely to be the judgment of a partial friend; but the changes of colour and the movements of feature could hardly be voluntary, and he thought if his production was destined to produce such effects on indifferent readers, his effort would not prove to have been made in vain.

It was when the tale was nearly concluded that Ned received a letter from the editor, which afforded him quite as much exquisite delight, as one announcing the recovery of a fortune would have done. It stated that he had several weeks previously negotiated with a publisher to issue the romance in book-form, stipulating that the author was to receive the usual per cent. on the copies printed, and he doubted not the arrangement would prove a satisfactory one to both parties. He said the publisher had taken the responsibility of changing the title, but retained the cognomen of "Mayfield." The publisher had caused to be printed the chapters as fast as they appeared in the paper, and had anticipated the appearance of the concluding ones by using the manuscript, which privilege had been freely granted him. This had been solicited because of the eagerness of many of the subscribers to the paper to learn the denouement of the plot, by purchasing the book. "And now," added the editor, at the conclusion of the letter, "after all the above circumlocution, I have merely to say that the book is already issued, and is selling famously. No doubt you have seen some mention of it in the list of new books, but failed to recognize your own offspring under another name. It is now simply "The Dishonoured," and if you will look into the morning papers you will see it advertised as being for sale at a dozen book stores. I intended to send you a copy, but mine is mislaid or has been borrowed. I will do so to-morrow, if you do not in the mean time visit the city."

When Ned had finished reading the letter he placed it in the hands of Susan, and watched at a distance the effect it produced. One moment she was pale and tearful, and the next was smiling through her tears.

"Why, Ned," said she, when she arrived at the conclusion, "the book is printed, and he says it is selling famously. Heaven be praised! But I knew it would please everybody if you could only get it published, because it interested me so much."

"But perhaps you were prepossessed in favour of the author."

"No doubt of it. But then I likewise considered whether or not I should like it if I knew not who wrote it; and I declare it was my candid opinion that it was an exceedingly interesting tale."

"And that was *my* opinion, decidedly," said Ned, "banteringly. "If it should only bring me a hundred dollars, Susan, I will write better stories hereafter, and make wages at it, too."

"Your friend Charles earns something with his pen, and why should not you be able to do likewise?"

"Yes, Charles derives a scanty support, some seven or eight dollars a week, writing reviews for a magazine, and notices for a newspaper—Here it is! They've published it!" cried Ned, in great excitement, glancing his eye down the columns of a literary journal which he had received at the post-office with his letter, but which had been temporarily forgotten.

"What, Ned?" asked Susan. "The book? Is it there? No! You mean——"

"No I don't, Susan. You don't know anything about it. Didn't you see me writing something a few days ago, in the little room over the kitchen?"

"Yes, Ned."

"Well, here it is in print! It was a review of Charley's poem. Now he shall have a joyful surprise. I must go to him at once. I have not seen him since I wrote the article, and he is doubtless wondering why I have kept away. Poor fellow, his health is not good, or he would have been to see me. It distresses him to walk, but his mind is bright and vigorous. He shall be happy to-night!"

"And his friend will be in a fitting condition to sympathize with him," said Susan, as Ned was striding rapidly away.

It was not long before the quick step of our hero traversed the distance between Summerton and the vine-clad cottage of Mrs. Kale. In the centre of the neat little room called the parlour, but which the widow had wholly surrendered to her guest, as she was too poor to have many visitors, young Montague was seated near a small table, pale, but with a sweet smile on his lip. Throwing down the paper in which he had been reading his last contribution of notices of new books, he sprang forward, and seizing his friend's hand, exclaimed: "Ned! What has been the matter? Why have you not been here since—since, when was it? an age!—last Saturday. You know the doctor came up from the city to get fresh air for himself, and thought I was getting worse—at least he has warned me not to venture far—for fear of a hæmorrhage, or something of the sort. And, Ned," he continued, when his friend was seated opposite, and regarding him with looks of concern, "I have sometimes of late had seasons of gloom and depression, and was almost ready to believe I was rapidly drawing near the place of my final abode. But—but still, you know, death can have no terrors for the Christian believer and guileless author, further than the annihilation of his plans——"

"Oh, Charles!" said Ned, with moistened eyes, "cease to dwell on so mournful a theme. By thinking too much of disease and death I have no doubt many a poor fellow's end has been hastened. Let such be the fate of weaker intellects. But we, always first endeavouring to discharge our duty to God, will soar on, as rapidly and as boldly in view of the grave as elsewhere. No terrors shall be able to divert us; and when grim death himself shall confront us, we will look him boldly in the face, with a consciousness that we leave something behind which cannot be pierced by his javelin, and which will cause our names to be remembered by succeeding generations."

"Ah, Ned! sometimes I am ready to believe the struggle will be in vain. Who, but you and a few others, will ever know of the existence of——no matter! If it be

even so, still the delights of composition, the glorious anticipations, the felicitous dreams, I have enjoyed, will have been a compensation—perhaps, at last, the only recompense of the author, who may not be conscious after death of either praise or censure.”

“Banish such forebodings, Charles !” said Ned, making an effort to smile. “Tell me, now, your opinion of the fair Elgiva. You have seen her, and heard the music of her voice. But I remember you would have her sing none but sad and plaintive songs.”

“Was it so ?” replied Charles, a gleam of animation illuminating his features, like a ray of sepulchral torch-light thrown across the stained glass of a gothic window. “I fear very much that I became ridiculous in her eyes. My thoughts were strangely absent that night. And when I discovered it was Elgiva who had strewn the flowers over the grave of Viola, I could not repress my emotions, and I am apprehensive lest—lest——”

“What, Charles ?”

“Did you not hear her say she always found flowers placed there by some one else, whom she could never detect in the act ?”

“I did.”

“Well, it is a secret and a mystery, which I may confide to you before I leave this place. The time when I shall make the disclosure must be chosen by myself.”

“I will not seek to precipitate it.”

“I know you will not, my friend—almost my only friend. But Elgiva ! She did not despise me, as I have cause to know. But she must have seen that I was not fitted for the society of the gay world. Her respect—her esteem—her favourable recollection, after—is all I hope for or desire. And she will not condemn me. I know it ! What think you ? Her carriage drove past here yesterday, and a bouquet was thrown from the window ! It was not for the lover, Ned ; no ! don’t smile in that manner—but for the poet !”

“And that is not the only tribute the poet has had,” said Ned, placing the review in Montague’s hands.

“What ! What is this ? A notice of my poem !” The young man, with a convulsive grasp and a trembling frame,

removed his chair to the most distant window, and perused the article in silence, while Ned gazed with interest at his excited, and classically beautiful face.

"Have you read it, Ned?" cried Montague, rising, in great exultation. "It is just; it is true; it is generous and noble! The writer is possessed of the true genius, and is a poet himself, for the passages he quotes, as the most worthy of admiration, are the ones which were deemed the most felicitous by the author. Who has done this? I did not deem any of the critics of this mercenary epoch capable of bestowing so much time and labour upon an obscure poet, whatever his merits might be!"

"You see, then," said Ned, with as much gravity as he could command, "that one should never despair, so long as he deems himself capable of success. Sooner or later merit has its reward. If long delayed, like capital well invested, the accumulated interest will come with the principal. And a moment of substantial triumph is ample compensation for a year of labour and painful delay."

"True, Ned. And believe me, that nothing short of the celestial bliss I hope for, could surpass the enjoyment I now experience. But who wrote it? Hold! I know!"

"Who?"

"Mark Mayfield!"

"Mark Mayfield! Who is he?" asked Ned, slightly turning aside his face, to hide the blush he felt mantling his forehead.

"Here! here!" continued Montague, not at all observing his friend, but pointing to certain expressions in the review with one hand, while he sought one or two passages in a handsomely bound duodecimo volume on the table. "Yes, the same mind dictated, the same hand traced them both! Who is this Mark Mayfield? His book was sent me the other day by my employer. I read it, admired it, and wrote a strongly commendatory notice of it, a portion of which was suppressed by the publisher, in consequence solely, as he states himself, of its unusual length, and to make room for a profitable advertisement. But excuse me, Ned. Let me read the review again. The reviewer says something about the genuine emanations of genius being tardily appreciated, and that Shakspeare him-

self attracted no especial wonder while he lived. Read my notice of 'The Dishonoured,' Ned, while I peruse this review again." Saying this, Montague approached the window once more, while Ned himself, with trembling hand, seized the paper containing the notice of his own book, and retreated to the other window. A profound silence ensued. It was the hush of a moment too blissful for expression; and could an artist have beheld the young authors as they traced the praises of their works on the printed pages before them, he would have been assailed by an irresistible impulse to sketch the multiform phases of their excited countenances.

"Charles!" at length exclaimed the novelist, rising, "You see before you Mark Mayfield, himself. And your conjecture was correct. I am the author of the review."

"Several times I suspected it! Oh, Ned!" cried the grateful poet, throwing his arms around the neck of his friend. "It was kind in you. But you have not misrepresented me. A time will come when candid minds will admit you did me no more than justice. My only regret is that the publication has not so great a circulation as some of the more popular magazines; but then the publishers having their hundreds of thousands of subscribers might not, in all probability, have inserted your article. Oh, it is a fearful struggle to clamber up the cliffs of fame! Almost every hand that might aid, is against you, until, at last, when opposition can no longer retard your determined progress, nor the harsh neglect of significant silence produce despair, the voice of commendation assumes a unanimity which, in turn, is often but slightly estimated by the successful author. The reason is that the encomiums are withheld when they might be the most beneficial—delayed when hoped for, and finally despaired of, until the indomitable mind of the aspirant has created a constituency of its own, a growing community of appreciating readers, who seize upon his productions as they issue from the press, irrespective of the indices of the critics."

"Such will be your triumph, my friend," said Ned.

No. At least I shall not survive to enjoy it. But I may anticipate it. I may innocently imagine a time will come when my name will be referred to with approbation

and respect. My name! No matter!" Montague ceased abruptly, while a momentary shade of gloom passed over his brow.

"But, Charles, you did not know, you did not even suspect, that you were praising your friend, when commending my book. And in truth I did not myself know it had been issued until to-day."

"What I have said of it is true. It will live, because it is true to nature."

"It could not be otherwise. While writing it I was cultivating Susan's garden. It grew with the plants and flowers. When wearied with the pen I laboured with the spade and the hoe; and as the blossoms expanded my ideas reflected the hues of nature. Ah, Charles, it is a blessed, excitable, debilitating occupation; and I feel that I am embarked in it for life. Although I have not yet experience the obstacles to success you have so truthfully described, I shall be prepared for them, and will not be deterred by them."

"You have physical and mental energies combined, and have not permitted your spirit to be stirred by the subjects of your thoughts. It is well. It is well. Hold your powers in reserve for the termination of the race. For me, my race is ended. I can write no more——"

"No more, Charles!"

"No more for posterity. The volcano in my bosom is exhausted. It was wrong—but my frame was too weak to restrain my soul. There is now a coldness in my heart. There may be a change—but I must not look for it. But the author of "The Dishonoured" is in the beginning of his career——"

"Why, Charles, you are my junior!"

"In years—but not in life. May yours be many and happy!"

"I beseech you, Charles, dismiss these mournful presentiments. You will live to enjoy the applause you have deserved."

"Ned, here is a volume of my poems. Give it to Elgiva. But do not say I sent it—at least not until she has read it."

"I will do so. And I shall make bold to give her a

copy of my book at the same time, and resolve to brave either her commendation or censure. My spirits are buoyant. I feel that I have resources sufficient to withstand the assaults——”

“Have you?” said Charles, smiling, and placing in the hand of his friend a copy of a daily journal published in New York, containing some captious strictures on the merits of “The Dishonoured.” It had been sent him by his publisher, as a hint that he should not be too ready to bestow extravagant praise on a book merely because it suited his own taste, before he saw what others said of it.

“That is malicious!” said Ned, dashing down the journal. “He assails without showing what he condemns, that his readers may judge of the justice of the condemnation. It is ill-natured—envious——”

“Do not be annoyed by it, Ned,” said Montague, still smiling. “I know the writer. He has recently produced a book himself which, I believe, was a failure, in spite of the most extraordinary efforts to keep it alive; and I have since observed that he invariably sneers at the productions of others whose reputations are supposed to be within the reach of his shafts.”

“Who is he?” cried Ned, turning over the pages. “Is it possible! Shallow Skimmer! I have told you, Charles, of his efforts in behalf of my romance—this identical work!”

“I recollect. You did him a favour. With minds like his, benefits received are often thus repaid. But the title was changed, and he may not have known you were the author.”

“The characters in the work, and the events, were not changed. Not a sentence in the whole has been altered since he saw it in manuscript!”

“The critics do not always read the books they approve or condemn.”

“So I have been told. Yet they must glance at a few pages. He certainly did read the first chapters before they were in print. It cannot be that he was ignorant of the fact that it was the same book, and that I was the author——”

“Be composed, Ned. It is my turn to cheer you. You

know it was the merits of the book, not the partiality of the friend, which should have guided his pen; and they do seem to have guided it with a vengeance!"

"Why he says some expressions in it are immoral and irreligious! Of course some of the characters are bad; both vicious and impious. And for this reason he cannot recommend it! Charles! when your hypocritical moral writers use the garb of piety to attract the attention of the good, and to derive benefit from their patronage, it is, in my humble opinion, taking the name of God in vain, and that too in the most offensive manner in which it can be done!"

"I agree with you. Therefore do not permit this censor's jeers to annoy you. Even his opposition will be a benefit. There may be those who will have reason to conclude that this Skimmer has done you injustice, and they will be stimulated to undertake the defence of your book!"

It was late when the young men separated. The whip-poorwill and the katydid were singing, and the stars were illuminating the whole expanse of heaven.



CHAPTER XXXV.

NO ROSE WITHOUT A THORN.

STILL Susan and Ned had nothing decisive from Persever. But the delay was deprived of its pain, by the unanticipated success of Ned's novel. Seemingly by one of those sudden caprices of taste, by which fortunes are sometimes made, "The Dishonoured" was sought after by "everybody." The publisher said it was mainly owing to the title, which was his work; and, no doubt, that was the first feature which attracted public attention. But then, the work itself, with the exception of a feeble attack now and then from the prolific pen of Skimmer, (who wrote for several publications,) was noticed by the press with favour. Better still, it sold well, and there was quite a sum accruing to the author's credit on the publisher's ledger.

And, just about the same time, there arose a "breeze of public favour" in behalf of poetry. It began on the opposite side of the Atlantic ocean, and spread over our broad domains like a fitful epidemic. Of course the elements had been originally moved for the especial benefit of the imperial geniuses; but a great deal of our native poetry was so obviously equal to any of the recent importations, that a most fortunate hue and cry in favour of American poets was the consequence. And when Montague received a check from his publisher for a hundred dollars, with the intelligence that his work was now having a brisk sale, and was praised by some of the most discriminating critics, the happy smile that beamed upon the young man's countenance was indicative of a felicity within which the events of this life do not often afford. It was the realization of a life-long dream; the fruit of years of toil; the concentrated bliss which is sometimes the product of seasons of anxiety and misery, and which, after all, is deemed a sufficient recompence!

During the progress of these events there was an occurrence of another nature, apparently insignificant in itself, but productive of unpleasant apprehensions in the minds of Ned and Susan. This was the removal of Dick Sutly and his family to Summerton. He leased a small dwelling in an obscure locality, but of sufficient dimensions to accommodate his coarse, ill-favoured wife, and their no less rude and ill-bred children. Dick professed to have his place of business in the city, the nature of which, however, was not stated. But having purchased a season ticket from one of the boats, he was, like many others, a daily traveller. His first care after his removal was to apologize to Timothy Hay, and to remove any prejudice in the community that might be existing against him in consequence of his conduct on the occasion already described. He was therefore diligent in his endeavours to make satisfactory explanations. His accusation of the honest farmer had been altogether the result of a mistake. It was not the same horse and buggy at all—they had merely resembled those he had seen.

Dick had taken the pains to make his apologies and explanations in person to the Tims at their own houses; and he contrived, not only to obtain their forgiveness, but suc-

ceeded in the attempt to ingratiate himself with their families so far as to be permitted to make repeated visits. But his efforts to produce the same favourable impression on the minds of Ned and Susan, did not meet with the same degree of success. He had the audacity to wait upon them both, thinking, as he said, it was necessary to apologize to them also, knowing their friendship for the Tims. He was listened to merely, and suffered to depart without question and almost without comment. Ned still thought he had seen him somewhere under suspicious circumstances, but his memory was not clear. Nor was it possible that a perfect recognition could now take place; for Dick, to guard against such a contingency, had effectually disguised his features by suffering a large quantity of hair to grow upon his face.

Dick could not avoid frequently encountering both Tim and Timothy on the boat, when taking their fruits, vegetables, calves, &c., to market; and on all such occasions the employee of Mallex manifested a friendly disposition; and frequently he facilitated their sales at remunerative prices. And the more effectually to win their confidence, he made repeated references to Ned Lorn, whose cause he seemed to espouse very heartily, and to unite with the Tims in bitter denunciations of the rich bankers. After he had thus cast his nets, the confident Dick thought he might as well be catching some fish, to use an expression of his wife, who was privy to his operations and objects. So he ingeniously inquired of the unsuspecting countrymen, if Ned was not then engaged in some plan to recover his fortune. The honest Tims did not suspect his motive; they did not doubt the honesty of his solicitude; but as they were not possessed of the secret themselves, they could not divulge it.

Nevertheless the cunning son of the wretched murderess, in the literal observance of his instructions, was not destined wholly to fail in the procurement of information for his employer. One day, when he was standing beside the Tims on the wharf at Summerton, awaiting the arrival of the boat which was touching at the village on the opposite side of the river, a small boy who sat upon the planks fishing for roach, was observed to be pulling up something quite weighty to which his hook had become fastened.

"What is that?" asked Tim.

"An old bit of leather!" said Timothy Hay. "It's a part of a saddle-skirt that's been laying at the bottom maybe ever since the old continentals crossed under General Washington."

"It's as old as the hills," replied Tim, turning it over with his foot, "I know old leather when I see it. It gits to be black as your hat. Stop, sonny, he continued, seeing the boy about to throw it into the water," it may be valuable."

"Valuable? What'll you give me for it?"

"I don't want it," said Tim, smiling; "but if Mr. Persevere was to see it, he might give you a penny or two. He's hunting up all the old pieces of leather in the country."

"What for?" asked Timothy.

"Lord bless you, who knows what the lawyers do things for! Mr. Persevere found the black covers of an old family bible at my house mixed up in a parcel of rubbish, and he begged me as a great favour to let him have 'em! Then he found some old yallar leaves that used to be in 'em, and he begged 'em also. They used to belong to Susan's mother."

"To Susan Mulvany's mother?"

"Yes, and there was a whole lot of dingy letters written by Susan's grandfathers, and mothers, and ancestorers, which my mother had kept in an old chist."

"And did the lawyer ask for them too?"

"He did, as sure as you're born!"

"That beats all!" said Timothy Hay, who certainly had no appreciative taste for ancient manuscripts.

"And I recollect, now," continued Tim, with sudden animation, "that Mr. Persevere, and Ned too, looked as well pleased as if they had found a regular will made by old Mr. Parke giving everything to Susan. And I heard 'em mention Susan twice! But here's the boat. Dick, wont you help us to put the calves on board?"

Dick readily rendered his assistance, smiling joyfully at the recitation he had just overheard, every syllable of which was stored in his memory to be repeated verbatim to Mr. Radley, to whom he now made his daily reports.

Although he had no more conception of the nature and value of Persever's acquisition than the innocent Tim himself, yet he doubted not the narration of what he had heard would be received with eager interest by his employer.

So elated was Dick with the possession of this intelligence, that he seized the largest calf of the lot, and twisting his tail, impelled him towards the boat with unusual violence. The poor animal cried very piteously, and pitched and reared very much in its struggles to escape from its tormentor. And it succeeded. For when within a few feet of the plank connecting the boat with the wharf, the exasperated animal made a desperate spring to the right, and plunged into the river, carrying Dick head foremost with him, amid shouts of laughter. Dick, who could not swim, was extricated in a half-drowned condition; but the poor animal escaped the knife of the butcher—for another day.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

SCENE IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE GRAVEYARD.

It was a bright enlivening Sunday morning, and the bishop preached to a full congregation. More than fifty candidates for the holy rite of confirmation were grouped around him, making the scene solemn and impressive; and the effect produced by the consideration that such a number of citizens and sojourning strangers in the village were eagerly awaiting the imposition of the apostolic hands, was not greater upon any one than the bishop himself. He had already officiated on several similar occasions in the same church, during that year; and such evidences of the success of his unremitting labours, and of the zeal and activity of the numerous subordinate clergymen under his immediate superintendence, could not be otherwise than extremely gratifying to his feelings. Hence, perhaps, the influence of the hour stirred the fountains of thought more

deeply than on ordinary occasions, and imparted to his gestures, his words, and his looks an indescribable animation, electric, though subdued; gentle, though irresistible; which touched a sympathetic chord in every breast. His words were the echoes of his gigantic thoughts; his thoughts the undeniable products of an original genius of the highest order; his genius, the gift of God; and hence the inspiration of his speech. No one who listened on that occasion, could have doubted the truth of his words; none could have controverted the holy origin of the church, or cavilled at the propriety of its sacred ordinances. The surpassing sermon; the mute multitude; the attending priests and deacons; the hundreds of youths and maidens from the collegiate institutions, all profoundly silent and intently listening, constituted one of those scenes which can never be wholly obliterated from the memory.

Susan, Ned, and Charles were present, the latter pale and feeble. Elgiva, who held a magnificent bouquet culled freshly from her own hot-house, was observed several times to be gazing in sorrow at the stricken youth. She had mentioned the fact of his resemblance of Viola to several of her friends, and now they too perceived it. And Viola had been so dear to her, that she could not avoid entertaining a vague partiality for Charles, which, however, she was sure could not be love; for, from the first moment she beheld his face, she felt a conviction that he too was doomed to an early grave.

At the conclusion of the services and ceremonies, Charles escaped from his friends, and withdrew, no one knew whither. Elgiva lingered in the transept until most of the congregation had departed. Her object was to avoid the attentions of several young gentlemen who had recently appeared to be vying with each other in a contest for her favour, and of course her hand and fortune. None of them, however, seemed to be destined to captivate her fancy.

But the young gentlemen awaited her egress, and accosted her at the door. They were, however, to be disappointed; for when one of them ventured to admire the bouquet she held, she immediately declared it was her inten-

tion to scatter the blossoms upon the grave of Viola. They knew she preferred being alone on such occasions, and so they departed, while the Rev. Mr. F., with his tasselled square-crowned cap reverently lifted from his head, threw open the gate leading to the city of the dead, and she passed in, acknowledging his respectful bow and polite attention. The reverend gentleman then joined a number of other officers of the college, picturesquely gowned and capped like himself, and representing most of the principal nations of Europe, whose languages were taught in the Summerton institutions.

Elgiva walked briskly, almost hurriedly, and was soon hidden from view by the many evergreens tastefully suffered to grow in the sacred precinct, and whose perennial green seemed to indicate that if "in life we are in the midst of death," there is likewise an existence beyond the grave. She came suddenly upon the place where the friend of her girlhood had been laid; and even before she raised her eyes from the ground she had scattered the flowers over the turf. Then she was startled by a deep sigh heard in her immediate vicinity, and lifting her eyes, beheld Charles, half hidden by the branches of a cedar tree which projected over the grave, leaning upon the tall stone, with his head bowed down on his breast, and altogether unconscious of her presence.

So unexpected was the encounter, that Elgiva could not wholly suppress the throbbing palpitations which agitated her breast; and she was upon the eve of turning away, and endeavoring to retire from the place without being observed, when Charles lifted his face, pale, and moist from recent tears. Their eyes met.

"I did not know you were here, sir; I did not obtrude intentionally; for this tree intervened between me and the grave, as I approached," said Elgiva.

"Nor did I design to meet you here," said Montague. "I thought it was an hour when no one else would wander in this direction; and it was not your step which roused me, for I did not hear the slightest sound: it was the perfume of these beautiful roses." He smiled sweetly as he pointed towards the roses on the ground.

And you—although there are no flowers readily acces

sible—I see, came not hither without the customary tribute of laurels. Yes, Mr. Montague, you are the mysterious one who has so long been in the habit of visiting this grave without being discovered; you do not deny it.”

“No—I will not deny it. There can be nothing criminal in casting a few leaves upon the grave of one who was as good as she was beautiful, and as pure as the angels of heaven!”

“Why—sir! Did you know her?” asked Elgiva, remarking with interest the extraordinary degree of animation fitfully illuminating the features of the young man.

“Oh, yes!” replied Charles, mournfully, suddenly relapsing into a state of despondency. “I knew her well, and——”

“Loved her?” asked Elgiva, so softly, so timidly, as if conscious of the impropriety of such an interrogation, but at the same time with such a tenderness of sympathy for the survivor, and such an evidence of sisterly affection for the early dead, that the words only seemed like the echoes of the low whispers of his own heart.

“Fondly! Oh, how fondly!” said he.

“And did you not enjoy her affection?”

“Oh, yes! I was the only one left her to love——”

“Only one? Why, Mr. Montague!”

“There were none left to love and cherish poor Viola—none but me!”

“None? none but you? Sir, I loved her, living; dead, I cherish her memory. Else why have I never ceased to——”

“Oh, pardon me, pardon me! I meant there were none other than myself whose affection she might claim. Yes! you were her friend—and may heaven reward you! And if an angel may solicit blessings at the eternal throne, she will shower them down upon you! I often see her in my dreams descending with flowery wreaths in her hands. One she fixes upon my brow, and one upon yours.”

Again the young man, although his face assumed the livid hue of death, became enthusiastic in his voice and gestures. And his aspect, together with the singularity of his speech, filled the breast of Elgiva with startling apprehensions; but, as if under the influence of an irresistible attraction, she could hardly summon the will to depart.

"But, sir," said she, pursuing the thought which had not ceased to occupy her mind since listening to the declaration made by Montague, "it seems very wonderful to me that, being long upon terms of intimacy with Viola—an intimacy without reserve—I should never have heard her mention your name. I knew she had a step-father whom she did not love, and that her mother yielded to his caprices—that she had a brother whom she adored, with whom alone I supposed she corresponded—but no other name was mentioned, and I did not think it possible—but—but yonder is my carriage, and they call me. I should like much to speak further on this subject—and I hope you—" she said no more, but returning his bow, departed.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THREE LAWYERS IN COUNCIL.

AT length the long-looked-for message was received from Mr. Persever. Ned's presence was at last required by the lawyers, now increased in number—the astute learned and experienced legal author and compiler, Mr. W——, being recently employed. Perhaps Ned had suffered less from the delay on the part of the lawyers, and from the wound inflicted on his heart by the conduct of Alice, than almost any other individual under different circumstances would have experienced. But one thing had the power of soothing him, and it was fortunate that its potency was exercised at the particular juncture when its counteracting influences were so urgently required. It was the absorbing interest of successful authorship; which it seems may not only abstract one's thoughts from the pecuniary cares of life, but even render the heart less susceptible of the wounds inflicted by unrequited affection.

"The Dishonoured" was read by thousands, and the name of "Mark Mayfield," was repeated by as many approving tongues. Nor was this all; for, inasmuch, as the

book was meeting with a rapid sale, of course there were no inconsiderable profits accruing both for the publisher and author ; and hence Ned was no longer assailed by the phantom want, often at the same time the most familiar and the most depressing spirit attendant upon the sons of genius. And whatever sums he received, were almost entirely added to the little store of Susan's wealth.

It was mid-winter, and Mallex had long been playing an important part at Washington, but not in the halls of legislation, where he soon found that his voice, so loud and confident among his own creatures, shrunk from its own echo in that vast theatre of intrigue and moral desolation. But he had the penetration to perceive the great object of the chief executive officer of the government, and the motives and designs of several others known to be the most influential leaders of the party to which he was ostensibly attached ; and he had the tact to convince them all, and especially the former, that he might have it in his power to contribute as much, if not more than any other man, towards the consummation of their hopes, provided the position he demanded were accorded him. His enormous wealth thrown into the scale, could not fail to be effective when large expenditures were demanded to maintain partisans on the stump or on the editorial tripod ; and the reputation he possessed—and which was undoubtedly deserved—for vast comprehension of mind and resources of stratagem, made him an auxiliary such as no party leader was ever known to despise. But perhaps an instinctive perception of the absence of any restraining virtue in his composition, when in the pursuit of an object, inspired those great characters with whom he conferred with the most irresistible desire to secure his services. And so the President himself, unconscious that the millionaire had likewise conciliated the other aspirants, and above all profoundly ignorant that he had ambitious views of his own to which he intended to make every one, high and low, if possible, subservient, resolved without delay to attach so valuable an auxiliary to his person by such ligatures as were not liable, in his opinion, to be ruptured by any inducements that could be held out by his rivals. He called him into his cabinet, and placed him at the head of one of the Departments.

It is not to be supposed that such considerations as the above always have a controlling influence on the action of the high functionaries of our republican government. It would be a scandal and a libel to make such an assertion; and such is by no means the intention here. There are honest men, there are great and good men, statesmen and patriots, ever to be found at their posts in the hour of danger; else, heaven help us! what would become of the ship of state?

Ned hastened from the wharf towards the office of his friend Persever. The boat had arrived some fifteen minutes before the usual time, having been chased by a rival steamer. Hence the spy sent by Radley to observe the passengers, did not get down to the wharf in time to see our hero. But Ned was not fated to pass unobserved. He fell in with Tom Denny among the omnibusses near the Exchange.

"How are you, Tom?" he asked, seeing his old friend looking him full in the face.

"Well, Ned, pretty well, I thank you," was the slow, measured response.

"But you don't seem to be so lively and light-spirited as when I saw you last. What, Tom, has prosperity saddened you?"

"I believe so," was the laconic answer, accompanied by a significant shake of the head.

"I doubt Tom, if there can be any happiness in the enjoyment of wealth dishonestly obtained. I suppose you are still supported by—by the Hon. Job Mallex?"

"Yes."

"I would advise you to leave him."

"I cannot."

"Cannot? That is a strange expression for one in a free country."

"Nevertheless it is true."

"But, Tom, you know he is a villain."

"Say not so—even if you believed it, do not say so."

"Tom, I suppose it is grating to hear such things said of any one who bestows benefits on us; but you know it is true, and that I, of all others, have the justest right to denounce him. Depend upon it, Tom, there is a fearful

retribution to follow his iniquities ; and I advise you, if you would not be involved in his calamity, to depart from his house and to hold no intercourse whatever with him."

Tom paused, and cast a penetrating glance at Ned. The next moment he turned aside and vanished in the crowd near the post-office. Ned stood a few moments gazing after him. At first he thought he had been suddenly attracted apart, and would soon return. Then, concluding that his patron had corrupted his heart, and transformed him into a subservient instrument, he proceeded on his way, congratulating himself that he had not definitely hinted at the enterprise then in meditation against the great bad man. But he had said enough to excite the fears of Tom, and to quicken the vigilance of Radley.

Ned found all three of the lawyers at the office of his friend, and he was introduced to Mr. B—— and Mr. W—— as the author of "The Dishonoured !" Ned blushed, and looked in great surprise at Persever, while the old lawyers smiled.

"It is not without a meaning, Ned. We shall have use for the author as well as for the heir," said Persever.

"And we have read your book," said Mr. W., throwing back his head, and scrutinizing the young man through his habitually half-closed eyes, which seemed to be weakened by much writing. "It is quite a clever production, and you need not blush so much on being stripped of your incognito."

"I am proud of your approbation, sir ; but the thing was so sudden, so unexpected——"

"Nay, never mind, my young friend," said Mr. W——, interrupting him. "It was confounded rude and ungentlemanly in any one but——"

"A lawyer," said Mr. B.

"Yes," continued Mr. W. "We are a rough set, and have a sort of *penchant* for making unexpected discoveries and sudden surprises. You must think nothing of it."

"I was astonished, sir, because I was not aware that Mr. Persever himself knew me to be the author of that book."

"Oho ! How did you find it out, Persever ?" asked Mr. W——.

"Gad, it was an accident. Mrs. P. met with the volume, and I read it. I will not say I liked it, for fear of producing another blush——"

"No," said Mr. W. "it is not our vocation to make blushes."

"But," continued Persever, "my curiosity was sufficiently excited to ask the publisher—in confidence of course—who was the author. That is the explanation. Now for business."

During this little scene, no less than three notes had been brought into the office by as many different messengers; and as none of them were of the slightest importance, Persever believed, and not groundlessly, that their conference had been noted by the agents of Mallex. But he had taken effectual precautions to prevent any of the details of their purposes from becoming prematurely known to the enemy.

It was then announced to Ned, who was almost speechless with astonishment, that the first step to be taken was to have a copy of his book sent to the secretary! And, moreover, the publisher was to be authorized and requested to intimate to the Hon. Mr. Mallex, that Mark Mayfield was no other than Ned Lorn.

"You seem surprised," said Mr. B., "and I do not wonder at it. But when you reflect that Mr. Mallex is now occupying a post of honour, and *should* be moved by honourable impulses; that his position can be maintained only by the skilful discharge of his duties, and the good report of the country; and that in confronting you as an author whose productions are stereotyped as they fall from his pen, and immediately after disseminated over the union; you see, if he still determines to withhold your fortune, he must be either reckless of the consequences which would follow an exposure of his abominable conduct, or else he must be prepared to rebut the evidence he will know it is our intention to produce against him."

"It is decided, then, that I am to wait upon him in Washington?" asked Ned.

"Certainly," responded Mr. W. "You are to beard the lion in his den; and if your cause is gained without further labour, you must not be precipitate in ascribing the

merit to yourself. It was Macdonald's charge that gained the field of Wagram, but it was Napoleon's victory! This charge on the enemy's centre is the result of much deliberation, and cannot fail to succeed, unless our intentions have been discovered; in that event the Austrian may be prepared to repulse the assault, and no good result is to be anticipated."

"In short, Ned," said Persever, "we have everything in a state of preparation to commence the action. Our documents are completed, our witnesses are in readiness, and the enemy is certainly occupying an exposed position. It is deemed the most prudent plan, however, to offer the olive branch before we open our batteries."

"I will endeavour to execute the work assigned me," said Ned.

"Of course you will," said Mr. W., "seeing that you are somewhat interested in the matter. We have great confidence in your discretion and judgment, or else we should not have complimented you by assigning you so important a part in the drama. Here is a syllabus of all our points, carefully prepared for the inspection of the honourable secretary. It embraces both the claims of yourself and Susan, and will indicate what we are in readiness to prove. Let him have time to meditate on it deliberately; do nothing to exasperate him; say nothing to displease him. Let him read the document, and between the pauses merely see your face. Mind, you are not to blush, because he knows who is the author of 'The Dishonoured.' Neither are you to frown——"

"May I smile?" asked Ned, jocosely.

"By no means! You are to look resolutely composed, determinedly complacent——"

"Ned, have you a copy of Lavater?" asked Persever.

"Lavater!" replied Mr. W., "what is Lavater in comparison with W——n?"

"Well," said Ned, "having fixed the faces I am to make, are there any particular words I am to utter?"

"Now we come to the important part of your mission," said Mr. W. "You will be particularly careful to say nothing at all—don't be precipitate! If you use a seal, young gentleman, have the words DON'T BE PRECIPITATE

engraved on it for a motto—you are to be careful to say nothing at all when a reply is not imperatively demanded. You may nod your head significantly, but non-committally; you may cross your legs hastily, but not timidly; you may scratch the left side of your nose very, very deliberately; you may draw forth your handkerchief, if it be a clean one, but apply it no higher than your eyes, for he might suspect your forehead to be moistened, a symptom of trepidation which all great men are accustomed to observe in humble individuals seeking favours; and if you can contrive to get some dust on your boots, you are to make it a point to remove it—without precipitation, and apparently without deliberate design—inoffensively, in his presence. Such employments as these may enable you the better to maintain the prescribed silence, the ‘masterly inactivity,’ which is really the most skilful diplomacy in life.”

“And when you have performed this difficult duty,” said Mr. B., “you will report to us immediately.”

“But remember,” said Mr. W., “you are not authorized to settle or conclude anything. That must be left to us.”

Ned promised to observe everything they enjoined; and being really delighted at the idea of visiting the federal capital, he took leave of the legal triumvirate and proceeded towards the establishment of his publisher, where he learned there were funds still constantly accruing to his credit, and whence it was necessary for him to have dispatched the book and letter to the address of the honourable secretary.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OFFICIAL ATTRIBUTES AND VANITY OF AUTHORS.

THE cabinet minister was seated in his capacious and softly cushioned chair before a large oval shaped table covered with many documents, and amply supplied with costly stationery. The ceiling was lofty, and the office was furnished in a style of grandeur becoming the liberality of the government of a mighty confederacy. On either hand were suits of ante-rooms and chambers. Messengers stood in the spacious hall awaiting the tinkle of the great man's silver bell; and scores of citizens, subordinate officers, and members of Congress, were lolling on sofas or lounging patiently in the ante-room, awaiting the moment when it might be convenient for the secretary to grant them audiences. There were those present who had opposed the election of Mallex; but afterwards they became his constituents, and now they felt no hesitation in petitioning for official patronage.

Every individual in the crowd of eager expectants had been named to the secretary by his astute messenger, Mr. Spring, who had long acted in the capacity of one of his most trusted spies, and was rewarded for his past services by the position he now held, and stimulated to renewed activity by the promise of a still more lucrative office in the future.

"The secretary is particularly engaged at present," was the response Mr. Spring was heard to enunciate every few minutes.

How was he engaged? He was hastening through the last chapter of "The Dishonoured."

"Fawner!" said he, when he laid down the book. "Come in, Fawner."

The old clerk entered deferentially from an adjoining room.

"Sit down," continued the secretary, pointing to a sumptuous chair, and which his humble servant very gently

and timidly took possession of. "You say that Bainton has returned to his post?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"And is attentive, zealous, and *greedy*?"

"You would think so yourself, sir, if you could see him operating. The first day he invested a hundred thousand dollars in the Readings, at thirty, and a week after sold at forty!"

"A good operation for a single week, and with only a hundred thousand invested."

"And then, sir, he loaned the money at two per cent. a month, with good collateral security. You may depend upon him now, sir. The spirit of acquisition wholly possesses him."

"Then, Fawner, you can remain here a few days longer. Let me have the list of applicants again." Fawner drew forth a paper, which Mallex perused attentively, while the old man's eyes seemed to glitter with confident anticipation.

"Have you seen all these men yourself?" asked the secretary.

"Every one of them, sir; and with the exception of a single man, they agree to the terms."

"Did you explain the stipulation so there can be no misunderstanding hereafter?"

"Oh yes, sir; ten per cent. of the salaries, payable on the first of every month, and payable to *me*, to be used for the benefit of the party, &c."

"One half of the ten per cent., Fawner, is to be yours; the remainder to be used as we may determine. And what man was it objected to the terms?"

"Jerry Snyder, sir, of the Red Lobster."

"What did he say?"

"He said he'd be — if he agreed to any such thing!"

"But did he not assign some reason?"

"Oh yes; he said you would not have been elected to Congress but for his wife, and then you would not have been taken into the cabinet. And he hinted something about exposure——"

"Exposure! What does he know?"

"I think he has heard something about the duel."

"The jackass!"

"*He* is no more than an ass. He desecrates the holy sabbath by selling liquor on that blessed day. Let me make bold, sir, to erase his name from the list."

"He must have the appointment on his own terms!"

"Of course, sir; you have reasons for it, and it must be done."

"Now, Fawner, I know you can keep a secret——"

"I, sir?" I am old enough to know that no good can result from betraying confidence."

"To be sure you are. Well, I have determined, yes, my mind is made up to——"

"You need not fear to trust *me*, sir!" said the old man, evincing an unwonted interest.

"To marry."

"Marry! Bless me, is that all? I feared you were going to resign—they annoy you so much. Oh, yes; I would marry, if I were in your place, sir. There ought to be somebody to inherit your fortune, somebody——"

"Mrs. Lonsdale is the lady, Fawner. You saw how attentive and condescending she was last night. I must have my levees and soirees, my days of reception, and sumptuous dinners."

"But, sir, sir—I hope you will pardon the intimation, sir—but she is already married."

"She has been married twice, and is now a widow."

"A widow? Forgive me, sir, but I certainly did hear her say last night that she had just received letters from her husband in Scotland, and that he was well."

"Yes, I forwarded them to her. When they were written, Lonsdale was well. But a few hours after he was seized with an attack of the cholera and died before morning. Here is the information from our consul at Glasgow. It is official." Saying this the secretary very deliberately flung the note into the fire, where it was quickly consumed before the eyes of the astonished Fawner. "It will be a fortnight perhaps before his death will be made known by the papers. I will not be the bearer of such tidings. In the meantime, we must not neglect to say in the hearing of Col. H., Mrs. Lonsdale's brother, that a package of letters has been mislaid or destroyed. The Col. desires

my influence, to accomplish a certain matter, and the sister is the instrument he employs. Fawner, she rejected my suit once. This time I hope she will act differently! But she can never charge me with having sent away Lonsdale, that he might die of the cholera. I did not dream of such a thing! He was interested in the business, desired the mission, and actually consummated the end before his death. The bonus we were jointly to receive from the iron manufacturers abroad, will now be mine, and yours, and Mrs. L. shall still enjoy some share of the treasure."

"Thank you, sir! I did not know that any portion of the proceeds would be mine."

"You negotiated the business with Lonsdale, and stipulated for the division of the proceeds between us. Of course you were to receive, and will receive, the usual commission. Courage, Fawner! Only be faithful to me, and prudent always, and you will die a rich man. I'll make your fortune for you!"

"Senator H——, sir," said the messenger, opening the door slightly, and projecting his face into the room.

"What shall I do, Fawner? He has written me a note protesting against the removal of one of his friends."

"I know it, sir. It is Mr. C. from his state. I pity the poor man!"

"Pity! There is no such word in politics. This C—— is sick, very ill, as I learn, and very poor, with about a dozen children.

"It is true, sir!" said Fawner, with whom there still remained some little humanity, notwithstanding his irresistible longings for wealth.

"True, is it? Then out he goes! Why, man, how could he divide his salary with us? He did not vote with us, nor did Senator H. vote for my confirmation. Spring, say that I am particularly engaged just at this moment, and if he can make it convenient to call at about this hour to-morrow, I shall be much obliged. Say anything that is polite—but don't admit him. To-morrow, you are to say the President has just sent for the secretary."

"Yes, sir," responded the messenger, smiling.

"Sit still, Fawner," continued Mallex, patronizingly. "Don't be frightened at the name of a senator. No one shall have admission until I am done with you."

"Commodore S——, sir," said Spring.

"Particularly engaged," said Mallex, and instantly the door was closed again.

"Governor P——, sir," said Spring, soon after, this time entering the office and closing the door behind him.

"Engaged! Tell everybody I'm engaged," said the haughty secretary, decisively, "until you hear my bell. Don't announce another name, or open the door again for any living soul, until you have the signal from me."

"I will remember, sir," responded the disappearing messenger.

"It would be quite as agreeable to me, sir," said Fawner, "to come in when no one else is seeking admission."

"But not so agreeable to me. If I were to admit one half the number seeking interviews, the whole of my time would be consumed in that manner, and the important duties of the office would be neglected. Sit down again, no one shall interrupt us."

"The President of the United States!" cried Spring, throwing the door wide open. The execration which had almost found utterance between the teeth of the irritated secretary instantly gave way to a smile of pleasure; and as he advanced towards the President, Fawner retreated unobserved from the office.

"Mallex," said the high functionary, declining the chair tendered him, on the plea that he was merely passing, and had no time to sit, "Some of our friends are becoming frightened at what they suppose will be the effect of the passage of the "Bomb Bill," as our great measure is termed by the opposition.

"Some of them, sir, are capable of being frightened at shadows. I know the reason. If the measure should prove to be a great and popular one, as I am convinced it will, they can derive no personal benefit from it!"

"Do you think H. and W. and B. have any pretensions themselves for the next term?"

"I know it! Sir, I have sufficient cause to be certain that such is the case. And so do those men they recommended for office, and whom you were pleased to appoint, know it. I have ascertained that fact."

"They shall have no more offices for their friends. You are right, Mallex; I can confide in you. Have the measure pushed to a vote, and mark those who hesitate. When that is disposed of, we'll give them another, which they may call a whole park of artillery, if they please."

"You mean the complaint against ——?"

"Yes. And there shall be explosive material in my message. But I am too fast. I am not sure that you agree with me. At the last sitting you did not express your opinion."

"I did not, indeed, sir. A war, sir, is always popular, if we can only make it appear justifiable and reasonable in the eyes of the people, and of the nations of the earth. I say war is a popular measure. But then we know from experience, that the authors of a war do not always reap the benefits of it. On the contrary some lucky general, perhaps of opposite politics, and perhaps originally adverse to the war, is made the President."

"That is true enough. The one who does the fighting, and gains the victory, attracts the attention, and reaps the applause of the people."

"Another thing, sir. The very probability of a war arrays all the wealthy men against the administration which favours it. War is destructive of commerce, deranges investments, prostrates the stocks——"

"Oh, I forgot you had something of that sort at stake."

"As heaven is my witness, all the wealth I possess should freely go to secure your re-election. Your re-election is the sole purpose of my labours and my life. I am resolved upon it; and I am convinced it can and will be accomplished. But besides what I have named, war invariably shocks the religious community. I profess to be religious, and hope I am, in spite of the malicious slanders of my enemies; and it is my serious, conscientious belief, that the Great Being who created the world, and governs all nations, frowns upon a people who go to war when such a sanguinary alternative may be avoided with honour. Oh, sir, rely upon it, you could never be happy in the presidential mansion, with the thought that, possibly, the sacrifice of many valuable lives might have been prevented!"

"You are honest, my friend. I applaud your candour,

and will confer with you again before sending in the message." The President then, affectionately taking the hand of his humane coadjutor between both of his, thus confirming the opinion he had expressed of his honesty, turned away and continued his walk between the double row of dependents who stood uncovered before him.

"Where are you, Fawner?" enquired Mallex, throwing himself back in the great chair, and smiling triumphantly.

"Here, sir!" said the oringing pale old man, emerging stealthily from an adjoining closet.

"Take your chair Fawner; we shall not be interrupted again."

At that moment Spring entered and approached on tip-toe.

"Did I not say I was engaged?" exclaimed Mallex.

"Yes, sir; and the gentleman only gave me his card, and told me to place it in your hand." The messenger did so, and then vanished.

"What! Is it possible? Ned Lorn! Fawner, here's Ned Lorn seeking an interview.

"Hah! I suspect it's a hostile message. They are not to be satisfied without blood. I hope, sir, you will pardon me for suggesting that you are under no obligations to stoop from your high position——"

"No fear of that, Fawner. He is beneath me, now. I can only respond to the calls of my equals. But it may be a business of quite a different nature from an affair of honour. Here are Radley's letters, which I have neglected to read for sometime past. Help me to peruse them, Fawner. You know about as much in relation to the claims of this impostor as Radley or anybody else."

The two devoted several minutes to the perusal of the letters, and were soon convinced that the object of Ned's visit must be in relation to the estates of the deceased brothers Parke. Mallex was much vexed, and manifested the annoyance he felt by his hasty gestures and his half-uttered curses.

"Pardon me, sir," said Fawner, diffidently, "but it seems to me that Mr. Spring might with propriety dismiss this visitor without employing any of the polite excuses you were pleased to dictate."

Mallex sounded the silver bell which stood upon his table, and Spring appeared.

"Spring, admit Ned Lorn," said the secretary. Both the messenger and the old clerk stared in astonishment. And when Ned was admitted the great man arose and tendered him his hand, which was merely touched by our hero.

"Be seated, sir," said Mallex. "You recognize my friend, I see," he continued, with a slight smile, observing that Ned bowed slightly to Fawner. "He is familiar with all my private and personal transactions, and you need not hesitate to speak freely before him."

"I care not who hears me," said Ned, returning the steady gaze of the great bad man, and with difficulty restraining the rising indignation in his breast, as he surveyed the features of the principal author of all his woes. With the exception of the brief encounter on the field of honour, Ned had not confronted the banker face to face, nor heard his voice, since the night when he had been abducted by him and conveyed to the horrible abode of Cadaver. And although he was but a child then, and many years had passed in the interval, the same features and the same voice, without perceptible change, which had subsequently been seen and heard in his dreams, now filled his vision and saluted his ears. But the terrors so often associated with the presence of the despoiler, had vanished; and Ned felt that if he could only meet his foe upon some truly honourable field of combat, there could be no greater delight afforded him on earth, or greater benefit bestowed upon mankind, than in vanquishing such a monster. Yet he knew that such a thing was impracticable.

"I am here," continued Ned, "by the advice of my counsel. With a view of preventing expensive and protracted proceedings in the courts, they have prepared this brief syllabus of the points they are prepared to establish, which they desire me to lay before you. They hope you may find it prudent and convenient to admit, at the beginning, what they shall be able to prove in the end. If so, and if the required restitution be promptly made, then our controversy with you ceases."

Mallex did not mark his words, knowing what the purport of them must be; but sat in deep abstraction, with the syllabus in one hand and a letter from Radley in the other, looking from one to the other alternately. Then he cast them both upon the table and leaning back in his great chair fixed his eyes upon the ceiling. There was a change in his countenance. His features seemed to be starting into something like the form of beauty, and his eyes expressed a sparkling joy such as the observant Fawner thought he had never known them to assume before.

Ned patiently awaited the result of the apparent struggle between right and wrong; but he was not to be kept long in suspense. By a sort of spasmodic transition the brows of the bad man became contracted, and his gaze was now fixed upon the floor. Although the aim of the lawyer had been well directed, it had failed to accomplish anything. At first, overwhelmed with the consideration that such a contest in the courts as that meditated by the powerful advocates of the poor orphan, must necessarily subject him to unmitigated troubles and perhaps to irrecoverable loss of reputation, his first impulse, as has been foreseen, was to yield everything, and thus at one blow to eliminate a fruitful source of annoyance which had already given him more vexation and his partner greater unhappiness than all the other evils of life combined. But when his guardian spirit suggested that the great functionary could easily frown down any imputation upon his character; that he claimed no kindred with the Parkes, and was not to be morally or legally responsible for the absence of affection on the part of Bainton for his nephew—if Ned were indeed his nephew; that a judgment by default or confession, would be followed by an exposure of many business transactions which it would be painful to disclose; and that he had already committed a *horrible crime*—perpetrated an irremediable act—to secure the prize which his silly impulse would have vainly relinquished; when these opposing facts rose up in his mind, he was instantly “himself again,” the same reckless and infamous Job Mallex of former days.

“And *Susan* is your kinswoman?” said Mallex, now

I will be there, and meet you at the door, and you shall see me deliver the volume into her hands !”

They rose up simultaneously. The final words of the patronizing secretary being the signal for the termination of the interview ; and the great man even condescended to accompany the delighted author to the door, and really overwhelmed him with polite parting adieus.

In the intoxication of the moment the object of Ned's mission to Washington entirely faded from his mind ; and he became more than half convinced that Mallex, after all, was not the bad man he had always supposed him to be.

And Mallex, amused at the successful effort he had made to conciliate the author by skilful appeals to his ruling passion, meditated deeply the project he had conceived of making Ned his friend. But it was his rule never to seek the friendship of any one whom he could not use, and whose talents could not be made subservient to his own selfish projects. It was not difficult to perceive that the enthusiastic young novelist, firmly endued with the correct principles inculcated by the president and rector of the college wherein he had graduated, and whose whole life, except in moments of transporting passion, would unquestionably be conformed to the perfect system of morals so diligently imparted by his tutors, could never be converted into such an instrument as would be likely to be serviceable in the accomplishment of the bad man's iniquitous purposes. Ned was, most fortunately, yet too young to feel the importance of wealth, however acquired, in this wicked world. But if he could not be used directly in the consummation of the great demagogue's schemes of ambition, at least his enmity might be appeased, and the danger of being made the mark for his ready pen might be averted. Therefore, without absolutely determining to modify his original intentions in regard to the estates of the deceased Parkes, Mallex resolved, for the time being, to cultivate the good opinion of the young man, and to exhibit him to the guests of Col. H., in the aspect of a friend. He had reasons to suppose that his rejection by the widow Dimple proceeded partly from a belief that he had been a participant in the wrongs alleged to have been done this same individual ; and inasmuch as

rumours of his complicity in that dark deed of spoliation were still industriously whispered by his enemies, he deemed it an important stroke of policy to be able to appear in society attended by our hero, as if the most intimate relations of friendship subsisted between them. At all events, the obstacle which Mrs. Dimple could not overcome, would be removed from the path of Mrs. Lonsdale.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SECRETARY—THE AUTHOR—THE BELLE.

At the appointed hour, Ned presented himself at the mansion of Col. H., and was met by Mallex himself, who introduced him as a particular friend to the polite and gentlemanly host. In the glitter of that brilliant assembly, composed of many of the most distinguished men and women in the country, the astute secretary foresaw that the elastic mind of the youthful author would be fascinated by the flattering attentions usually accorded the real or supposed proteges of powerful cabinet ministers. It was his purpose to prevent the young author from bestowing any deliberate thought upon his own affairs until he should have finally decided in the premises; and therefore he constrained him to attend at his side during his progress through the assembly. Ned was introduced to the most intimate friends of Mallex; and he could not avoid noticing the expressions of surprise which frequently escaped the lips of those who repeated his name.

After completing the round of ceremony, Mallex whispered some brief request to Col. H., who disappeared. He then turned to Ned, who had not yet been separated from him, and observed in a low tone, but with a smile,

"You must prepare for a surprise. You will be astonished, but you must not lose your presence of mind."

"Oh, if the surprise be not likewise very dangerous, I

think I shall bear it with some degree of composure," said Ned.

"It may, or it may not be dangerous. Tender eyes and ruby lips sometimes inflict fatal wounds."

"If that be the danger, let it come. I am proof against such assaults. There was a time when—but no matter!"

"Very well. I have warned you. And, remember, if an exigency should arise for my interposition, you may command me. Here they come. Stand at my back. I will confront the enemy first, and open the way for you. Where is the book? Oh, here in my pocket. They will not recognize the author. That secret is safe."

The gigantic stature of Mallex could not prevent Ned, whose curiosity was highly excited, from perceiving who it was that approached from the opposite end of the saloon. Led by Col. H., Alice and her mother, both richly but rather flashily attired, came forward and greeted the distinguished guest with marks of pleasure. Mallex, in the meantime, by an occasional motion of the elbow, or intercepting movement, seemed to strive to prevent the ladies from discovering the young author in his rear.

"I promised you a book, you know," said the burly secretary, after the usual unmeaning but indispensable compliments.

"Oh, yes!" said Alice, banteringly; "and I am glad you did not forget the promise."

"They say that great secretaries are addicted to the vice of forgetfulness," observed Mrs. Lonsdale, striving to be satirically witty, as was then the fashion.

"I am an exception. I do not believe I forget anything," replied the secretary, somewhat gravely.

"Not even your enemies, I suppose," rejoined Mrs. L., while Alice was turning over the leaves of the book.

"I forget only injuries. For instance, when I was a younger man, I was made almost the victim of certain detractors. Their evil report arose from certain misapprehensions, I can readily presume; and I forgive them. You see if one does not deserve the enmity of the world, no enemies can injure him. My path has not been obstructed. And now the sweetest gratification I enjoy, is

in daily beholding the very individuals who once censured me harshly, nobly coming forward and virtually admitting that I did not merit their condemnation."

This speech probably awakened a certain unpleasant reminiscence in the mind of the lady, and she could utter no satisfactory reply. She was relieved, however, by her daughter.

"I shall be delighted with this book, sir," said she. Miss Z——, who you know is the President's niece, paid me a visit yesterday"—the voice of the belle was slightly raised as she mentioned the President's niece—"and she declares it is a most charming novel, only the hero is made to be too unhappy under the infliction of his slanderers."

"She sympathizes then with the hero?"

"Certainly. And she says the author, who is understood to be quite a young gentleman, has, as usual in such cases, expressed many of his own experiences in the traits and feelings of his hero. But what a horrid title! Why should he be termed 'The Dishonoured,' when, as Miss Z——, the president's niece, assures me, he is made to do nothing at all dishonourable? But Miss Z. says I will be delighted with the book, and that you could not have done me a greater pleasure than in procuring it for me, unless, indeed, you had undertaken to present the author!"

Notwithstanding the crowd, constantly in motion, had become extremely dense, and conversation and laughter were echoing in every direction, Mallex did not fail to perceive that the young author had been startled by the words just uttered, and his quick ear caught the low sound of a deep drawn sigh.

"To present the author!" iterated the great man. "Well, perhaps I might do that, also. My friends suppose I can do anything. I believe I shall send for this delightful young man for your especial gratification. But you must not fall in love with him without first consulting your mother."

"I am sure I shall like him!" said Alice.

"Alice is her own guardian in love affairs," said Mrs. L., attracted by the reference to her, notwithstanding she was apparently listening to the gallantries of a very old, and very distinguished military officer. "She has dis-

carded a score of gentlemen who would have had my approbation, and smiles upon as many whom I could never admire. She is her own mistress."

"And will remain so," said Alice, archly.

"Unless," said Mallex, "this Mr. Mark Mayfield should be so fortunate as to succeed in obtaining the reins."

"I think I should like to be the wife of an author," said Alice. "I shall expect you to present Mr. Mayfield. I am 'fancy free.' My heart is whole."

It would be difficult to describe the emotions of our hero during this conversation. He had almost ceased to think of Alice as an object of pursuit; he had quite resolved never to make another effort to obtain her hand; and absence, and other absorbing excitements, had diminished the ardour of his youthful affection. But when he heard her encomiums on his book, and the apparently earnest expressions of desire to meet with the author, he could not wholly resist the potent influences of gratified vanity; and for a moment she seemed to resume the place in his affections which she had once so completely occupied. But when he reflected that her language was not prompted by any thoughts of her old companion; when he heard the declaration that she was "fancy free," and that her heart was whole, it was impossible to avoid the sad conclusion that all remembrance of himself had long since been banished from her breast.

"In the meantime," said Mallex, "I have a young friend here whom I will present as a sort of substitute until I can lay hands on this lucky author. Where is Mr. Lorn?" continued he, looking to the right and left.

"Lorn! Lorn, did you say?" exclaimed both the mother and daughter.

"Yes, Ned Lorn—the same Ned Lorn, concerning whom my enemies once slandered me so much. He is an accomplished young gentleman, and was not at all to blame for the acts and pretensions of others. Where is he? Oh, here, just behind me! Since you are already acquainted with each other, I will leave you a moment. I see the President has arrived." Saying this, the secretary withdrew from the position he had occupied, with an expression of dignified equanimity which he well knew how to assume.

"It has been some time since we had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Lorn," observed Mrs. L., who really seemed to survey the manly form of Ned with some degree of pleasure.

"And he has enjoyed very good health, if one may judge from external appearances," said Alice, quite recovered from the momentary perturbation which the sudden announcement of the name of our hero had occasioned.

"Oh yes," replied Ned. "My health has been excellent. And it is gratifying to perceive that time has made so little impression upon you both. You, madam, appear to be quite as young as when I first beheld you, many years ago. And your complexion (addressing Alice) has certainly improved. A happy life and cheerful spirits are the best defences against the assaults of time."

"It is certainly the wisest philosophy to seek them," said Alice; and one may easily suppose you have likewise derived benefit from the enjoyment of them."

"Yes," said Mrs. L., "Mr. Lorn has improved amazingly, and I shall hope to see him more frequently hereafter. The old nonsense between you, no doubt, has been long since forgotten. I will leave you. Yonder is Gen. S——. I must go to him. He is so very agreeable!"

"The old nonsense, Alice! Is it forgotten?" asked Ned, in tones of sadness, when Mrs. L.'s retiring satin ceased to rustle in his ears.

"Nonsense should be forgotten," was the reply, as Alice nodded smilingly to the salutations of several of her admirers who were passing.

"Never fear that I shall seek to revive it. I would not dispel the rational delights which surround you; the enjoyments which have added such a bloom to your cheeks. It would be cruel and unjust, even if I had the power, to diminish the happiness you find in the gay society of the many ardent admirers who constantly surround you. And it is surprising to me that some one of them, more fortunate than the rest, has not captivated your heart. Nay, do not stare so gravely; but pardon me for being an involuntary listener, a short time since, to the declaration that your heart was whole, &c."

"You heard that? Have you read the book?" she con-

tinued, without emotion, and again turning over the leaves with her jewelled fingers.

"Yes, I have read the book," said Ned, assuming an air of indifference.

"Do you like it?"

"Yes; I must confess to a favourable opinion of it."

"Do you know the author?"

"I do."

"Let me beg of you, then, to bring him to our house in Philadelphia. We are here on a short visit to uncle H., but will return home in a few days to prepare for the reception of Mr. Lonsdale. Is Mr. Mayfield handsome and agreeable? You have no idea how much I should be delighted to see him before Miss Z. meets with him. We are to correspond, when I return, and I should like to fill a letter with the description of the author. She has a passion for authors. But is he handsome?"

"Some say he is. But you could not admire him, I fear."

"Why?"

"He is inclined to be serious and silent; and despises the frivolities of merely fashionable society."

"No matter. It will be a novelty, and he may afford amusement for us. Miss Z. will be so much pleased." Miss Z. was an old maid.

"No doubt Mr. Mayfield would feel highly honoured at the thought of having pleased Miss Z., the niece of the President."

"You knew she was his niece? Oh, you heard me say so. But I know another lady fond of authors, and particularly of poets."

"And may I learn her name?"

"Oh yes; for you are a poet. But you certainly do know her already; and she is young, beautiful and rich. I used to correspond with her, too, and I don't know why she ceased to write to me."

"You say I know her?"

"Undoubtedly, for she mentioned you in her letters. It is Elgiva Bloomville. Did you not blush at the mention of her name?"

"Not that I am aware of," said Ned, very gravely, almost

indignantly, and deeply wounded at the incredible change which had taken place in one whom he had so fondly loved, so often worshipped.

"Mercy on me! Who was that?" cried Alice, hearing a heart-rending scream at the distant end of the saloon, where there was a circle around General S——."

Some one had mentioned the unexpected arrival of a steamer, which had sailed before its time from Liverpool, and among the items of news detailed, mention was made of the sudden death of Mr. Lonsdale. The scream had been uttered by Mrs. L.

The announcement had been made by one who was not aware of the presence of Mrs. Lonsdale, and he had taken the precaution to observe that the Colonel, who was his intimate friend, was not within hearing.

A general dispersion ensued; and Mallex, still keeping in view of Ned, followed him down the marble steps, and joined him in his walk towards his lodgings.

"A widow again, Ned," said the secretary, "but quite young enough to find a third husband."

"I suppose, however, she is not to be reconciled by considerations of that nature," was the young man's reply.

"Not yet. Not yet awhile. Drive home, Charles, I will walk," said he, addressing his last words to his coachman. "By your leave, Ned," he continued, familiarly, "I will accompany you to your hotel. I have some things to propose, and I don't know a better time than the present."

Ned assented with the politeness inseparable from his nature, but was not flattered by the condescension. His interview with Alice had abated the ardour of his spirits, and dispelled the intoxication of the moment which had been so skilfully contrived by the penetrating mind of the secretary. The object of his mission to Washington recurred to him, and he reflected that it had not yet been followed by any decisive result. However, the one to whom his communication had been made had intimated his intention to make certain propositions, and these he hoped might be of such a nature as could be acceded to.

And as our hero thus reflected, and while they walked along without the interchange of many words, the banker-minister considered finally what should be his decision in

the premises. By the time they reached the hotel the case was determined. Nothing was to be admitted, nothing conceded, in regard to the estates of the deceased Parkes. His name would be mingled with the proceedings as the partner of Bainton; his origin and the whole history of his career, as far as it could be known, would be detailed in a court of law, and perhaps in the newspapers. These things could not be otherwise than unpleasant to one occupying his present position, and might furnish occasion for ill-natured detraction. But then he was not or could not be known, as a responsible and interested party; he did not withhold any money from the heir, if indeed an heir existed; and if it should be established that his partner had acted unjustly, whether intentionally or not, why should it affect his character? The only one living who could prove his criminal complicity in the transaction, was in his power, and debarred the opportunity of making any disclosures. Besides, if Susan recovered the estate of Daniel L. Parke, of course she would be the rightful heir of John Parke; and if the principal and interest of their claims were computed from the beginning of the partnership of the bankers, the amount to be demanded would approximate the sum of \$250,000! Such a relinquishment was altogether out of the question.

"Ned," said the secretary, when they were seated together in a private apartment of the hotel, "since I have had the satisfaction of becoming acquainted with you, I feel an interest in your welfare. I admire your talents and am pleased with your address. It is my wish to do something for you, and unless you have unreasonable expectations and extravagant desires——"

"I expect nothing, sir, beyond what justice may give me the right to demand. As to my desires, if they be extravagant——"

"You do not understand me; Ned. The claims of yourself and of Susan Mulvany to the estates of the Parkes, will result in nothing. They will be resisted. They cannot be substantiated."

"Then my business here is ended. I was directed merely to present myself before you and deliver the statement of facts which we are prepared to prove. You know

that the eminent counsel employed—or I should say who have volunteered, for they are so confident of success that the case is to be conducted at their risk and expense—would not be likely to threaten without first being satisfied of their ability to perform. But knowing the capacity of your mind, they were induced to afford you an opportunity of yielding voluntarily that which the law will ultimately demand, supposing that you might be desirous of avoiding the unpleasant consequences inseparable from litigious contests.”

“I feel highly honoured by them! And I could reciprocate the compliment by applauding their superior penetration. It was for them to suppose that a banker of some capital and reputation, and a cabinet minister, enjoying the confidence of the President, would be extremely desirous of avoiding the notoriety and scandal attending such proceedings as they meditated! You can inform them that they were not in error as it regards the calculation in the abstract; but they were mistaken in the man.”

“Then the other alternative remains,” said Ned.

“And in the meantime I have thought of something that might conduce to your advantage, provided you do not become an *active participant* in the game played by the lawyers for their own benefit. I can procure an appointment for you with a salary of \$1500.”

“No, sir; I will not wear a master’s collar. I will not be a dog.”

“I can procure you the hand of Alice, and her fortune.”

“No, sir! Pardon me—perhaps you could—I will not doubt it. But I would have no honourable title to either, without her heart. Sir, she has no heart! Make me no other offers! Give me that which is my own. It is all I ask. And if you will not, I shall endeavour to make you!”

“Inexperienced, impracticable boy!”

“Inexperienced, sir, in villainy—impracticable, I hope, in the iniquitous operations——”

“Enough, sir!” said Mallex, rising. “You have my answer. It is scornful defiance!”

He withdrew abruptly, and hastened to telegraph his instructions to Radley. Ned employed the remainder of the evening in writing to his friends in Philadelphia and Sum-

merton. The claim of Susan could be no longer a secret, since proceedings at law were to be commenced immediately. And hence there was a note in the letter to Susan for Tim, informing him of the importance of the documents he had so fortunately preserved.

CHAPTER XL.

MINOR CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA.

WHEN Tim Trudge received his note from Washington, he ran with it open in his hand over to Timothy Hay, and was followed by Betty, who declared that she deserved the thanks; for it was owing to her prudence that the "old trash" had been preserved. And she would not relinquish Tim's button until he acknowledged that she alone was entitled to all the credit.

Now it so happened that when the above important communication was exhibited by Tim, Dick Sutly was in the orchard of Timothy Hay, for the purpose of buying some young game cocks on speculation. He had an offer in the city, which he considered extravagant; nevertheless he was haggling with the farmer about five cents. The moment, however, that he learned the purport of the letter, he struck a bargain and departed hastily. He did not pause to ascertain whether or not the matter was to be kept a secret by Tim and his friend; but pushed directly on for the boat which was to leave Summerton in a few minutes for the city. He was just in time.

When Dick presented himself before Radley, the unscrupulous practitioner was already engaged in the execution of his orders from Washington. He had been instructed by Mallex to offer a reward of a thousand dollars for a certain certificate of marriage, and that he deemed a very liberal price for so small a document, in a country so full of resources that an instrument of any prescribed character or required authenticity, might be obtained for half the

money. Radley would not commit a forgery himself for a thousand dollars, knowing as he did the danger; but that did not prevent him from offering a few hundreds to a certain wretched scrivener of his acquaintance, for the production of such a document as was required. He would not share the danger—for how could he know that the scrivener would fabricate the instrument?—but he would divide the reward!

“I know all about it!” said Radley, when Dick had delivered his news.

“Yes, after I’ve told you!” said Dick, indignantly.

“No. I knew it before. It is in the newspapers, and is the common gossip of the city. But I’m glad to see you. I shall need your presence. I shall have something *very important* to say to you—and it will please you. But I must see Mr. Fawner first. He is back from Washington. Be good enough to find him, and bring him here. Don’t lose a minute, Dick, my fine fellow!”

Dick stepped into the street, elated by the expressions of the lawyer, but inextricably puzzled as to the nature of the villainy on foot. He was up to cheating in the cock-pit, or even in the stool pigeon game, and had been one at a nocturnal sacking of a jeweller’s shop; but in the game of titles, and in the war of opposing manuscripts, he had never supposed it possible for him to be called on to play an important part. But he was to execute the orders of the lawyer, and so he enquired for Fawner at the office on Third street, and learning that he was not there proceeded to the mansion of Mallex. Fawner had arrived that day, but had departed again for the country. Dick, supposing he had gone to the secretary’s country house, unhesitatingly pursued him thither. At the country house Mrs. Carpenter informed him that Fawner had just gone over to see one of the neighbours, she could not tell which, but if Dick would remain and take some refreshment, she was sure Mr. F. would return. This Dick consented to do; and the more willingly upon learning that Tom Denny was absent in New York attending to some matters for Mallex, and would not return for two days. So Dick was the only male person upon the premises, and enjoyed the privilege of wandering about the grounds and through the rooms at

pleasure, while the careful Fawner, now in the full tide of accumulation, was in treaty for the purchase of a valuable farm on his own account.

"What can that be for?" soliloquized Dick, as he cast his eyes up at the window of the prison-room. "Them shutters is double, and as full of iron as a jail door." Saying this, he threw a pebble against them. "Hello! what's that?" said he, listening, and supposing he had heard something resembling a half-smothered howl within. "I'll try you again," he continued, throwing another pebble against the shutter. "Twist my buttons!" cried he, "if I didn't hear it again! Don't I know that howl? I'll see!" Making a hasty reconnoissance of the position of the closed chamber, he entered the building and soon found his way to the door of the prison-room.

"Who's in here?" cried he, through the key-hole.

"Marcy on me! ain't that you, Dick?" was the response.

"Well, it is, old woman! How the dickens did you come to be locked up in here?"

"Mr. Mallex done it, Dick."

"What for?"

"He was afraid I'd blow on him."

"And no wonder. You was always getting drunk and running after him for more money. He served you right!"

"Oh, Dick, don't say that to your own mammy. Aint you a-going to let me out?"

"I've not got the key."

"Is anybody with you?"

"No; I found you out accidently. But who feeds you?"

"The hump-back. And sometimes he don't give me fresh vittals but twice a week. Oh, Dick, can't you break open the door!"

"No. It's too strong for one man, but I'll get some help and come back to-night, seeing as how you are my mammy. But you hadn't ought to plagued Mr. Mallex so much. It'll be a lesson for you hereafter."

"It will so, indeed! Dick, I'll take your advice after I get out."

"Is it dark in there, mammy?"

"It was. But I've larned to see some in the dark. I thought I should a died at first; but I've got better, because I hadn't any liquor. I don't shake so much as I used to. Dick when you come, be sartin to fetch a lantern, for I've lost a dimon pin in the straw."

"Good bye, old woman—look out for me to-night!" said Dick, retiring from the door and descending to the lawn.

"Where are you going!" asked Mrs. Carpenter, seeing him hastening away.

"I'll be back," was his only response.

"Dick hurried to the city with the determination to procure the assistance of some of his old cronies and release his mother from confinement. But it was to be done in a clandestine manner, so that his agency in the business should not be known, for fear of having the stipend, regularly received by him from the banker, cut off.

Failing to meet with any of his city accomplices, Dick crossed over to Camden and rattled up to Summerton in the cars. His appeal to Tim and Timothy was promptly responded to, as he had foreseen. The captivity of his aged mother could not be justified in the opinion of the honest farmers, and they resolved to liberate her. So, without hesitation they accompanied Dick down to Camden in the 8½ o'clock train.

Without pausing on the way they passed through the city, and proceeded out the road towards the old stone mansion; where Dick assured them his mother was detained a prisoner. Their arrival in the vicinity was announced by the dog. Dick preceded his companions, and appeased the animal. During the last few months he had been at the mansion several times, and had, as usual, embraced the opportunity to cultivate the good graces of the watch-dog.

"Is that you, Dick?" asked Mrs. Carpenter, looking stealthily from the hall door. Why, Mr. Fawner came back soon after you left. But he's gone, now. He went to the city, and said you must follow him there. He wants to see you very much."

"Yes, this is me. I'm goin' to the city soon."

"What in the world are you chaining the dog for. We always turn him loose at night. I wouldn't stay here for any money, if he wasn't to guard the house."

"I'm chaining him to keep him from biting me, or my friends. Now, Mrs. Carpenter," he continued, as he entered the hall, "come with me a minute into the library."

"What do you want?"

"Come; it's a mighty important thing I want to tell you."

When they entered the library, Dick turned about and locked the old woman within.

"What've you done that for?" exclaimed she.

"Nothing," said Dick. "It's only a trick to keep you from seeing my friends. It's all right—Mr. Mallex's orders, you know."

Dick then returned to the hall door and called the honest farmers in. Taking up a lamp and axe, he led the way to the prison-room.

"Here we are, mammy," said Dick, through the key-hole.

"Is that you, Dick?" she asked. "I didn't think you'd come so soon. You're a good boy; a mighty dutiful son!"

"That's her!" said Tim.

"Yes, she's his mother," said Timothy Hay. "Let's stave in the door and let her out!"

They applied the axe alternately without making much progress. The padlock yielded to their blows, but not the main fastening of the door. The door itself was of great thickness, and strengthened with heavy irons.

Meantime the screams of Mrs. Carpenter were heard, and the dog recommenced a furious barking. The one, however, was locked within the library, and the other chained to a post. But the rescuers might have heard the sound of a man's voice, had not their own operations deafened them to all other sounds. It was Radley, calling for Dick. He had waited impatiently for his return during the day; and when Fawner could give no satisfactory account of him, the nature of his business was of such urgent importance that he resolved to seek him at that unseasonable hour himself.

Radley released Mrs. Carpenter, and the old woman in

gratitude, procured him a light, and instructed him how to find the door of the prison-room, which the three liberators were endeavouring to batter down.

"Hold on!" said Dick, crouching behind Timothy, when he saw Radley approaching.

"By gonny!" said Tim, "if it's the one who's fastened your mammy in here, let's make him undo her!"

"Dick Sutly!" said Radley, "I've good news for you. Let the old woman alone, and I will explain everything. Don't be frightened; I'll not trouble you. I didn't know she was here, nor why she was confined, until last week—but I'll explain everything to your satisfaction. Come with me into the next room."

Dick followed, while the Tims awaited the result of the conference.

"Dick," said Radley, "you know that old Daniel L. Parke died without heirs, leaving more than a hundred thousand dollars."

"I never heard edzactly how much, but they say it was a sight of cash."

"And you know that Ned Lorn couldn't get it."

"No. He can't prove he didn't die in the house of refuge. But he writes, as I told you, that they'll get it for Susan. If I was a widower, I'd buck up to her."

"She wont get it, Dick. Old Daniel L. Parke was *not* an old bachelor; he did not die without leaving a son and heir."

"He didn't?"

"No."

"Who's his son?"

"I know him. And I'm going to get his fortune for him."

"Where is he? Can you make anything out of him?"

"He is here. Richard Sutly Parke!"

"Hey? What! Aint that laying it on too thick? I see! By golly! A hundred thousand dollars! Mr. Radley—if you could do it for half, what a windfall it'd be! But there's old Mallex! he's——"

"Dick, he's the very one who most desires you to be the heir."

"He! He does? But does he want me to finger the money?"

"No, I doubt that. His object is to keep it himself. But, Dick, if you and I can keep our own secrets, we'll play the rich man a clever trick. You understand? I say if he proves you to be the son and heir of old Parke, I can contrive it so that nothing on earth, or beneath the earth, can prevent us from getting the whole fortune—and then another one! Dick! he expects merely to pay me a paltry fee, and you a few dollars per week, and keep everything himself. Shall we play him the trick?"

"Yes, by gonny! Mum! It's all as clear as daylight. I'll swear I'm the son and heir——"

"No. There must be other evidence. You must find a few witnesses of the right sort, and I'll tell you what they must prove. Be prudent now. A word to the wise is sufficient. You must get rid of those countrymen. Send them about their business, and afterwards we'll determine what shall be done with your mother."

"She could be let into the secret. She is a first rate hand at such kind of things. I know she'll agree to it!"

"We'll see. Send away those simple farmers. It wont do to take her into court. Nobody will believe the handsome old lawyer ever married her——"

"That's a fact! You're right. But she'll pretend to be dead, or do anything to help to snatch such a power of money——"

"I have it! Let her be crazy. Send away the honest men, and then have a talk with the old woman."

"It's all right!" cried Dick, reappearing before the Tims. "It's all right! Put down the axe, friends. I'm obleeged to you. But it was all a mistake. Everything's been explained to me. Let her alone."

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" cried the old woman, who had been listening. "Oh, you ondutiful and onnatural son! Good gentlemen, don't mind him. He's been bribed to turn agin his own born mammy!"

"Shut up, mammy!" said Dick, applying his mouth to the keyhole. "It's all right," he continued, in a lower key, "and I'll tell you all about it when they're gone."

But this promise did not satisfy the old woman; for how could she dream of being made the widow of D. L. Parke, or of the possibility of deriving any personal benefit from an incarceration in a dungeon?

The Tims, however, reluctantly relinquished the instruments with which they had been striving to break open the door; and following Dick, they descended silently to the hall.

"It's all right!" repeated Dick. "I didn't know before that mammy had ought to be there. It's all right. Good night. Wont you say good night?"

The Tims, who were leaving in silent indignation, turned about and gazed at him.

"Is that old woman your mammy, sure enough, Dick?" asked Timothy, his habitual smile gone completely.

"Sartinly," said Dick. "And some of these days you'll hear news of my daddy."

"And you say it's right to keep her fastened up in there like a cow that's been bit by a mad dog?"

"Yes—I tell you it's all right, and that's afficient."

"Then I *will* give you a good bye!" said Timothy, as he dealt him a blow between his eyes that laid him on his back. And when Dick exhibited symptoms of recovery, and attempted to rise, the honest farmer sprang upon him, and administered several additional blows which completely disabled the undutiful son.

Then Radley came upon the scene. "Who are you?" he demanded, dragging Timothy away from his fallen victim.

"I'm nobody among the big bugs," replied Timothy, smiling as usual, and displaying his array of faultless teeth.

"Nobody? That wont answer! You have violated the laws, and I am a lawyer. Your name, sir!"

"Timothy Hay, a farmer! I'm not ashamed of my name or my occupation. Where are you, Tim?" he continued, looking around, and perceiving that his friend was not present. But a moment after Tim reappeared, emerging from a room on the left of the hall with an iron poker in his hand, which, however, he concealed behind him.

"Aint you the jack-legged lawyer that sent me to prison once?" he asked, as he confronted Radley?

"Tim Trudge!" replied Radley, starting slightly, for he had been several times punished by the innocent victims

of his cupidity. "Yes, Tim; but it was for breaking the head of Mr. Mallex with a poker."

"Take that, then!" And Tim aimed a blow at Radley's head, which might have been a retainer for life if it had not been partially arrested by his arm. Nevertheless the force of the blow was sufficient to level the lawyer evenly with his client.

Then the two Tims, without casting a look behind, made the best of their way to the city; and as soon after as possible returned to their peaceful homes in the country.

Radley and Dick called for poultices, which Mrs. Carpenter supplied. Radley blamed Dick for being the cause of his suffering; and Dick made a solemn declaration that he would never again solicit the assistance of honest men.



CHAPTER XLI.

THE LAW'S DELAY—LITERARY HOPES—THE DYING POET.

AFTER wandering about the capital a few days, and easily gratifying the curiosity he had often felt to see the representatives of the union in Congress assembled, Ned returned to his friends in Philadelphia. He was anxious to learn what would be the next step taken, and whither it would lead; and hoped it might be attended with better success than had been his mission to Washington.

There was nothing in his own conduct, however, with which to reproach himself; nor did the lawyers attribute the failure to conciliate the great secretary to any omission on his part. It was merely a mistake in the man, and not in their calculations. Almost any other individual, similarly circumstanced, would have yielded to their suggestions.

Simultaneously with the appearance of Ned before the lawyers, they were informed, by a note from Radley, that the pretensions of Susan Meek, or rather Mrs. Mulvany, would be resisted on the ground of remote collateral descent, *when there was a legitimate son of D. L. Parke in*

existence. This announcement, although it filled them with indignation, as they had been perfectly well acquainted with the eldest Mr. Parke, and could not believe he had ever been married, convinced them that the contest was to be of doubtful issue, and the victory, if ultimately gained, the result of a desperate struggle.

They warned Ned against being too confident of success. If he triumphed at all, or rather if a verdict should be obtained in favour of Susan, it would probably be after many long delays, and the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. But they cheered him with the assurance that inasmuch as they had embarked in what they conceived to be a just cause, the means should be supplied to conduct it to a conclusion, and no exertions omitted to obtain the desired result. They assured him of their conviction that the opposing party intended to produce a false heir; and they pledged themselves to use their utmost endeavours to expose every fraud, and bring every criminal to the bar of justice.

Ned parted from Persever in despondency. But happening to step into the publisher's store, he was cheered and reanimated by the happy eyes, hearts and hands that greeted him. He was assured that his book continued to sell very well; and not only so, but it had caused many orders to be received for the poems of his friend Montague, to whom he had dedicated the last edition of "The Dishonoured."

So great was the revulsion of his spirits, produced by this little incident, that our hero went on his way rejoicing. Fortune might never be his; the rogues might succeed in debarring him from realizing his just inheritance; and the pomps and vanities of the world might still lead captive the one he had loved, and who once professed to love him; but, nevertheless, an unfailing resource remained, which would furnish the means of subsistence, and had the power of rescuing his often-depressed spirits from the brink of despair. The genius to create, the taste to please, the zeal to persevere; these he possessed, as he was aware, in no ordinary degree, and of which no human agency, no demoniac device, could ever deprive him.

With a light heart, a confident step, and an exulting

smile, the ardent young man pursued his way towards the depot, with an intention to return to Summerton, and while awaiting the tardy decrees of the courts, to employ his hours in the completion of another work, which, he did not doubt, since his first had been so successful, could be easily and advantageously disposed of.

When passing near the corner of Third and Chestnut streets, Ned encountered his uncle Eugene, attended by Radley. The latter bestowed his usual unmeaning salutation; but the other started, with marks of dismay on his face, as if he had confronted an object of terror. He, too, then, bowed to his nephew, half unconsciously, and evidently in that sort of perturbation attending spasmodic attempts to regain one's self-possession.

Ned gazed but an instant at his uncle; but that instant sufficed to fix a picture of mingled remorse and degradation in his memory. Eugene's form was prematurely bowed, his features pale and pointed, and his restless eyes, clouded with swollen veins, gleamed out fearfully, as if familiar with the horrors which ever flit athwart the inward vision of those whose consciences are oppressed with the recollections of unrighteous acts committed, and which have never been redressed.

Arrived at Summerton, no discouraging phase of affairs, no freak of fortune, or caprice of villainy, could qualify or diminish the unalloyed and mutual delight of Ned and Susan upon meeting again after their comparatively brief separation. No mother to her child, no child to its parent, could have been more unaffectedly attached than those kindred orphans.

The narrative of the nocturnal adventure of Tim and Timothy made Ned laugh very heartily; and his account of meeting with Alice, and his imitation of her ludicrous references to Miss Z., the President's niece, diverted Susan, who perceived, with unalloyed satisfaction, that her foster son might easily survive the sometimes fatal shock of unrequited love. But she was grieved to think that Alice was capable of becoming so sadly changed; and she uttered a secret prayer that both Ned and herself might still remain in poverty, if the possession of fortune must be attended by such unworthy changes of heart.

Mrs. Kule called during the day with a message from

Charles, who she said was "quite low." Ned hastened thither, and found his friend in a sad condition, but with a sweet smile on his wan lips.

"Ned," said he, with difficulty extending his thin white hand, as he sat propped up in an old arm-chair, "I am much rejoiced to see you again, for I was really apprehensive that we might—might not meet again on earth. I know we shall meet in heaven—and Viola and Elgiva will be there!"

"Why, Charles, what has so depressed you? Whence these gloomy forebodings?"

"Not depressed—not gloomy, Ned. You know we must all die, and death has no terrors for me. I might desire to be permitted to remain a little longer, to perfect a work which has long employed my thoughts—but it may not be, and I shall cheerfully submit. Gloomy, did you say? Not so! Oh, heaven is one scene of sublime beauty, one eternal thrill of poetry! And whatever others may think and say to the contrary, the poor poet feels a consciousness within that he shall be wafted thither. Poetry is from heaven, and will return thither; and all who have been melted into tenderness by the strains of divine harmony, partake of the heavenly inspiration. Ned, thus it was my purpose to confer a benefit on mankind. But my harp must hang upon the willow. No earthly crown of laurel must encircle my brows. But the flowers which are strewn upon the grave of Viola, shall perfume the turf which lies upon the breast of her—BROTHER!"

"Brother? Viola's brother!"

"Yes, Ned. Tell it to none but Elgiva before I am gone. Elgiva will think of me as the blossoms fall from her lily hand. You look surprised. Montague was not the name of my father, nor is it all of mine. But Viola and I were twins. Our mother's second marriage broke her heart. It was not that she married again—but that she chose one beneath her in education, and unworthy of her in morals. And the death of Viola planted a thorn in my breast which was destined to rankle to the end!

"My dear friend, do not anticipate such a result. You may recover—you will be well again. Let me bring Dr. T. to see you."

"No, Ned, it were useless. I have had a visit from my physician in the city. He was candid, as I desired him to be. He knew I could bear to hear the truth, and he told it me. The few medicines any one would prescribe, I have near me, and I take them according to the directions. It may be months, said the doctor, before the inevitable event takes place—and it may not be weeks. But enough of this. It distresses you. I will leave a sealed packet for you among my papers. That is all I will say, at the present time," added he, smiling, "upon matters of such *grave* importance. I sent for you, to assist me a little with your pen."

"I will do so cheerfully," said Ned, through his tears.

"I know you will, and you will do it well. The demands of the publishers become more pressing as my powers of performance diminish. But they pay more liberally, and I thank them."

"And no doubt you have laboured too much."

"It is probable. Indeed the doctor was positive on that point. But I will not indulge again—yes, indulge, for it is a pleasure to write one's thoughts in this sweet secluded place. There, Ned, are some half a dozen volumes, which I desire you to review for me. And here is an order for a tale of unlimited length, to appear weekly, and not less than four columns each issue. Two dollars a column is the offer. You may write that also, if you desire to do so, and submit it as a substitute for anything I might produce."

"I will submit it to *you*, Charles. I have been writing a new story these three months. To-morrow you shall see it, or I will read it to you. Seek repose now. I will leave you. I will despatch the books for you as quickly as possible, not looking at the title pages until my opinions of their merits are formed. I will do the author justice, remembering I am an author myself who has felt the injustice of others."

"One moment, Ned!" said Charles, his expressive eyes resuming their wonted fire. "Have you seen the last number of the Daily——?"

"Oh, yes. I read it on the boat. It was poor Skimmer, again. His own book failed; and now, Mr. C. informs me, the publishers of the—— pay him four dollars a

week for his critical notices. He says my work is crude in style, coarse in language, and deficient in plot. Nevertheless it still sells; my publishers told me so to-day. That made me proof against the critic's lance. Good bye, Charles. Do not write; but take repose."

Ned devoted a portion of his time to the work assigned him; and his brief reviews were unhesitatingly accepted by the publishers. He then made rapid progress with his "Discarded Lover," the title of his new novel, portions of which he read daily to the dying poet.

Charles sincerely approved or frankly condemned as he listened to the impassioned production. And in almost every instance Ned freely expunged whatever met the disapprobation of his friend.

The first chapters were sent to the publisher who had written to Montague, and he cheerfully acquiesced in the arrangement of substitution agreed upon between the authors, and the publication of the story was begun in the next number of the journal. As the work progressed many readers were attracted by its merits, and soon the attention of the public was fixed upon its absorbing developments. The publisher acknowledged to a large accession of subscribers, and the venders of periodical literature were constantly returning for new supplies of the paper.

At Summerton, although none but Charles and Susan were in the secret of the authorship, the paper was sought after with avidity, and the story was frequently made the subject of conversation. Ned was once near being surprised into a betrayal of his guilt, as he called it when mentioning the circumstance to Charles, being suddenly confronted by Elgiva, and interrogated as to who Mr. Mark Mayfield was, and where he lived. Susan declared the new production superior in many respects to "The Dishonoured;" and Betty, as well as Tim and Timothy, to whom Susan loaned the paper, declared they laughed about half the time when reading it, and cried the other half.

All this was doubtless very gratifying to the author. But that which afforded him the most satisfaction was the apparent amendment of Charles. His hemorrhages were less frequent and less copious than they had been a month or two previously; and although he did not improve in strength

or in appetite, yet he did not hesitate at times to admit that his mournful presentiments might happily have proceeded merely from the promptings of a transitory despondency. And Ned, seeing that his friend did not exhibit so many evidences of physical prostration when deprived of the use of his pen, would not consent for him to resume the exercise of it. He wrote for him at his dictation, or substituted his own composition, when there was a perfect unity of sentiment, which happened pretty generally to be the case. And all this labour was an unaffected delight to our hero. It was gratifying to his self-esteem to see his productions in print, but there was a nobler enjoyment in the generous purpose of obviating the necessity of injurious toil on the part of his dear friend, and in the thrilling hope that he might even be restored to health.

And indeed the cold bracing season seemed both to restore the spirits and to impart additional strength to the invalid. But it was not often during the winter that he could wander beyond the threshold of the cottage. He had, however, the consolation of being visited by the vigilant young assistant rector of the parish, and occasionally by the bishop himself. And a family of warbling songsters, beguiled by his constant care, had omitted their usual migratory flight, and now received their daily food from his attenuated hand. Thus they were preserved until the breezes of spring reproduced the myriads of insects.

The meadows were again clothed in green, the infinite variety of flowers once more made the air redolent of sweet perfumes, and the stricken poet survived to enjoy them, and to appreciate them in strains of thankfulness to his own and nature's God. With the arm of Ned sustaining his fragile form, he was enabled to walk forth and view the inspiring landscape, and gaze at the blue sky lightly dappled over with fleecy clouds.

It was upon such an occasion that the two friends lingered upon the velvety bank of the majestic river, and watched the glorious setting of the sun. The orioles were in full song, the flowers in perfect fragrance, and the spires and crosses—emblems of God's supremacy, and monuments of man's devotion—tinged with golden hues. Vessels on the one hand glided silently over the unrippled expanse of

water; on the other a long procession of lowing kine emerging from the rich pasture, moved slowly homewards, stepping in perfect measure with the cadence of the tinkling bell.

Leaning upon the shoulder of his friend, one arm encircling his neck, the poet joined his white thin hands together, and said:

"Oh, heavenly Parent, I thank thee! Oh, merciful Creator, receive my humble thanks, for the many blessings thou hast bestowed upon me, and especially for the inappreciable happiness I now enjoy. I know thou wouldst not permit me to taste of such bliss as this, upon the eve of departure, if it were not thy good will that the poor wanderer should at last find eternal repose in heaven 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' Ned—my dear brother—you weep. If I too have tears, do you not see I am smiling through them? It is a joyful, though a solemn moment. We stand as it were upon the narrow confines separating what is mortal from immortality, and feeling equally the influences of earth and heaven. But oh, how different their nature! It is good to visit such scenes, at such moments, and with swelling hearts to utter thanks to the great Being who created us, for having hitherto preserved us from destruction. Ned, come hither at this hour, in future years, and remember me. Think of the friend of your early manhood. And as often as you come, I will meet you. Think I am with you. And as long as you can come with the emotions of this eve resuscitated in your breast, believe, implicitly, that although you have known no earthly father, you have an indulgent parent in heaven, who is smiling upon you!"

The silence that succeeded the words of the poet was broken by a peal of seraphic music from the small chapel in the vicinity, which was followed by the chant of praise sounded by the sweet voices of two hundred young girls.

It was now the hour for repose, and the poor invalid was startled by the consciousness of being exposed to the evening dew, against the ill effects of which he had often been warned. They retraced their steps to the humble cottage, where Ned remained until a late hour, for he was to visit New York the next day, and might be absent a whole week.

He was going at the solicitation of a respectable publisher, who had a proposition to make him in reference to the work then passing through the columns of the periodical, and likewise in regard to other works, which might enable the young man to enter upon new fields in the world of literature, with the comfortable assurance that the ox would not be entirely muzzled during his labours.

CHAPTER XLII.

A SPIDER CAUGHT IN HIS OWN SNARE.

RADLEY sat in his office with a passionate scowl upon his face. Dick Sutly promenaded backwards and forwards with his thumbs thrust into the armholes of his black satin vest, and with the velvet collar of his green broadcloth coat thrown back upon his shoulders. His huge spreading feet were garnished with glistening patent-leather shoes, set in conspicuity by the tightness of his fashionable piebald pantaloons. His enormous fingers were hooped with gold bands, and from his shirt bosom projected a virgin nugget from the mines of Australia.

"Sell that lump of gold on your breast," said the angry lawyer, "and get the money for it. I am out of funds."

"But wout you make a fortin out of us?" asked Dick, turning sharply towards the lawyer.

"I begin to fear not. Twice has Mallex put off the trial. He must suspect something. He must think some one has been supplying you with funds under the impression that you are soon to receive the fortune. I fear you have ruined everything by your foolish extravagance and ridiculous displays."

Radley was right. Mallex had no intention of permitting Dick to recover D. L. Parke's fortune. If it must go at all, he preferred either Ned or Susan as the heir. The idea of fabricating a claim in favour of Dick was one of the ill-conceived expedients of which bold bad men are some-

times capable. His object was merely to defeat the purpose of the adverse lawyers, and he had not foreseen the new perils into which he had plunged. Hence the repeated interposition to prevent the rendition of a verdict in favour of the false heir. He desired only delay, which, of course, it was not difficult to obtain, under the circumstances of the case.

The greedy counsel of Dick, however, had different views. Under the conviction that his client must inevitably have the large fortune in dispute awarded him, he had taken measures to secure, as he supposed, the greater portion of it. He had procured the liberation of the old hag, Dick's mother, from durance, and removed her to the house of Jack Cadaver, where, assured it was necessary to the cause for her to remain in strict seclusion, and even to assume the symptoms of mental derangement if discovered by the opposing lawyers, she impatiently awaited the munificent award that was promised her. But in the meantime both herself and her son were vouchsafed a foretaste of the sweets of fortune by the repeated advances of Radley, who invariably received their bonds for quadruple the amounts paid them. And in this manner had the lawyer, yielding to the cupidity of his own heart, and to the importunities of his clients, expended nearly the whole of his fortune; and hence his irritable vexation at the obstacles thrown in the way by his master employer.

"That's according to taste," replied Dick to the remarks of Radley, not comprehending the full import of his words. "Every gentleman of fortune has his own fancies. Can't I do what I please with my own money?"

"Yes, when you have it. But suppose you never get it?"

"I won't suppose anything of the sort. Haint you got the marriage certification? And haint I got all the witnesses ready to answer to the identical things you wrote down? They got it all by heart long ago, and if you don't hurry up the cakes, some of 'em 'll forget their parts. And mammy 'll forget hern, as sure as a gun. She's had a tech of the paralitics agin, and hasn't laughed a bit since. And she don't talk any hardly. But if you could 've hearn the last words she spoke to Aunt Cadaver last night, I guess you'd 've squirmed a leetle."

"What did she say?" asked the lawyer, suddenly awakened to the importance of the words of the alleged widow of D. L. Parke.

"I won't tell, for fear of giving offence."

"Nonsense. There is too much at stake for us to fall out among ourselves. I don't care what it was, I promise not to be offended. What was it? It is necessary that I should know it."

"She said she was a wicked woman——"

"She did!" exclaimed Radley, in unaffected affright.

"And Mallex the devil himself——"

"Hah! What does it mean?"

"And you his head sarvant."

"Dick, here's a hundred dollars more. Go to your mother and stay with her. Don't let her talk that way, or everything will be lost. Don't let her repent. Keep her in a good humour—or put her out of the way, confine her again in the dark room——"

"That won't do. Aunt Cadaver knows where it is."

"Anywhere else, then, where she can't tell tales out of school. She had better be in a vault, with an iron door closed on her than to prevent us from getting the fortune." These words were meaningly uttered—but Dick did not have the courage to commit a murder—and especially to lay violent hands on his parent.

"I'll try to argy with her; but she can't be moved. Do you hurry up the cakes, before she loses her appetite. You shall set at the head of the table and help us to what you like. Good bye, sir."

Dick had hardly disappeared before Mr. Fawner made his appearance. He was greeted with much cordiality by the lawyer, who knew he had influence with the secretary.

"I hope, now, you have some good tidings for me," said Radley. "I have written to Washington three times for the return of our principal document, and got no answer. No doubt Mr. Mallex was engrossed with the affairs of the nation. I hope, however, he has found time to communicate with you."

"Yes. I have a letter from him, and his instructions in regard to the late Mr. Parke's estate."

"And is there no document returned? I mean the certificate of marriage."

"Yes. He writes he has examined it, and finds it quite in form. He enclosed it to me, and——"

"Good!" exclaimed Radley, rubbing his hands delightedly. "Now we'll proceed! The result is certain! Where is it? I hope you brought it."

"And directed me," continued Fawner, not heeding the interruption, to place it under lock and key in the vault, until——"

"What? In the vault? Under lock and key? How long is it to remain there? Am I not to have it back immediately? I procured it and sent it to him at his urgent solicitation!"

"Until," pursued the imperturbable Fawner, "further advice and instruction."

"We shall lose the fortune! The other party will proceed! What can it mean?"

"Mr. Radley."

"Well."

"I knew Daniel L. Parke perfectly well."

"And pray what has that to do with the case? Hundreds beside yourself knew him."

"Why it is my private opinion—mind, I say it confidentially—that such a perfect gentleman was never the father of such a blackguard as Dick Sutly. There must be some mistake in the matter, and perhaps Mr. Mallex thinks so too. Good day, sir." And he was gone before the lawyer could utter the imprecation that was hissing upon his lips.

A few moments after, Persever entered.

"Well, Radley," said he, "when do you intend to test the pretensions of your son of Daniel Parke? We are getting impatient."

"Soon enough; soon enough for you," was the best tempered reply the vexed lawyer could make.

"Perhaps not. But not only we, who are particularly interested in the result, but the whole bar, and the judges themselves, are impatient to behold the features of this long lost son of their old friend and brother. And when he shall be exhibited to their satisfaction, we shall next demand the presence of his mother, the widow of Parke, and the maternal parent of——"

"Go on. Are there more children?"

"Oh, *you* must find them out if they exist. They would be joint heirs, and therefore your clients, whose pretensions we must oppose."

Persever checked himself when upon the eve of committing a blunder. It might not have been good policy to assert the existence of other children; and Lucy Sutly, who had been his own servant at the time of the murder of Parke, was again a domestic in his family. But for many years she had ceased to have any intercourse with her depraved parent, and being really a good pious girl, Persever had sought and found her, and was at that very time employing her services in a manner little dreamed of by Radley. Lucy had been induced by him to find out the residence of her mother. It was explained to her how great was the danger of both her mother and brother meeting an ignominious punishment if detected in the attempt to establish a fraudulent claim to the estate of the deceased lawyer. And Lucy, knowing perfectly well that her mother had never seen Mr. Parke in her life until he came to dwell at Persever's house, felt it incumbent on her to interpose and prevent if possible the perpetration of such a monstrous iniquity. She understood very easily that it could never be the intention of either Mallex or Radley to permit her brother and mother to possess the estate. There could be no motive for such a proceeding. They merely designed to make use of them as the instruments to achieve their guilty purposes. And it was in consequence of Lucy's exertions that the apparent change in the wretched old woman's conduct, mentioned by Dick, was to be attributed.

"We'll hunt them all up. Never fear but they will present themselves before the day of distribution," said Radley, gravely, for it was the first time he had thought of the contingency of the existence of other heirs, and it flashed upon his understanding that if they did exist it would produce a depreciation in the value of the bonds he held for sundry advances of money.

"I shall oppose any more postponements, Radley," said Persever, retiring slowly.

"And so shall I!" said Radley, returning the parting nod of Persever, who withdrew.

The next visitor was Eugene Bainton.

"Radley," said he, "the whole town is hooting at the idea of Dick Sutly being the son of Daniel L. Parke."

"But if we can prove the fact, we shall recover the money. That, I take it, is the important thing."

"Who will recover the money; who is to derive the benefit?"

Radley had spoken professionally, and so he explained the "we."

"I happen to be the most interested one in this business," said Eugene. "Besides the fortune of the eldest Parke, now in the hands of the administrator, I have set aside and invested separately the amount of funds John Parke would have been entitled to had he lived. The heir of one is the heir of the other. And can you suppose I would be willing, under any circumstances, to permit this disgusting rowdy, this crude spawn of a horrible monster, to possess the fortunes?"

"It seems to me that there will be no option if the law awards it. I can prove everything the law requires."

"Prove! Mr. Radley, you know that this Dick is no more the son of Parke than I am; and knowing this, does it not appear to you sometimes like a species of roguery to endeavour to procure the money for him?"

"I presume his title to it is quite as good as those in whose keeping it remains. Why have I been employed—why have I been put to so much expense and labour, if it was not the intention to prosecute the claim to an issue? It would be derogatory now, it would be disastrous to me, not to go on. I am the counsel of the claimant, and *will* go on!"

"Will? and without our concurrence?"

"I must. And I must have the original certificate of marriage locked up in your vault."

"Yes, it may be produced in a certain court by a writ *certiorari*, as I am advised by other learned counsel. But beware!"

"Beware of what? Am I not employed by Mallex and yourself?"

"Are we not the defendants in the case? And was not our expedient to act merely as a diversion to beat back the

pretensions of the other party? Yes—you shall have the certificate if you require it. But, I repeat, beware! You know it is a forgery."

"But at whose instance was it committed?"

"Yours, solely. I have seen copies of Mallex's letters on the subject. They were written with an especial care to avoid furnishing any ground for criminal imputations."

"That may be. No doubt it is so. But the scrivener

"Is ours, entirely! You may start and turn pale; for the matter is important, and the danger very great, if you push matters to an extremity. Yes, I repeat, the scrivener is quite willing to go into court and testify upon oath, that so far as he was concerned, the instrument was prepared in execution of your order. The names, dates, &c., were furnished by yourself. By you he was paid. And he had no knowledge of the use that was to be made of the document. You see your danger. You are the counsel for this Dick, and our names do not appear as parties in the action, or if they do it is rather in the attitude of defendants, than as promoters of Dick's claim. Therefore, when you assume to act against us, or independently of us, we shall prove the forgery, and send you to the penitentiary

"Enough! I submit!" cried the terrified lawyer. "Mallex has me in his power. He has sent you to me, and furnished the ideas you have expressed. I confess everything. He has been apprised of all my operations, even the secret projects I meditated. There is no escape from him. I am ruined!"

"Not so, perhaps," said Eugene, in a milder tone. "Mallex is aware, though, that you have expended all your money upon Dick with a view of being liberally reimbursed at no distant day; and it is his policy to keep you poor and dependent, that you may be the more useful."

"Fool, fool that I was!"

"Perhaps not. But the claim of Dick, you must recollect hereafter, is to be upheld merely for the purpose of frightening away the others."

"It cannot be upheld without the certificate."

"Then, and for the purpose named, it is to be used—

used not feloniously—not to obtain the money—but to keep the other party from recovering.”

“But the scrivener?”

“He will be held back by Mallex, so long as you execute his orders. When you attempt enterprises on your own account, the scrivener is to be let loose, and will assail none but you.”

“I am destroyed!”

“Be honest, and I will undertake to have replaced the sums you have so foolishly expended.”

“Honest? How?”

“How! True, Radley, how shall we be honest? You see my sunken features, my prematurely grey hair, my stooping form. They are the effects of the burden of guilt I bear. But, thank God, I have never been a consenting party to any irremediable crime! Radley, when you shall be confirmed in the opinion that “honesty is the best policy,” as I believe you soon will be; when you contemplate the fearful losses you are liable and likely to make by acting on the opposite principle, only give me a convincing evidence of the change, and I will see that your expenditures shall be reimbursed.”

“Dictate to me what course I shall pursue!” said the burly lawyer, his face covered by his handkerchief.”

“I will, from time to time. But you must not suppose it to be my intention to undermine my partner. I shall do nothing without first notifying him of my intention and my object. That is the only way to maintain a contest with him. He is unmatched in strategy. Do you remember the conversation you once held with Ned Lorn on the steamboat?”

“Yes! How did you know anything about it?”

“Every word was repeated to Mallex by one of his spies. Every word of our conversation now may be repeated to him. I care not. Let us think and speak nothing that we would wish to be concealed from him. Then he will cease to be terrible. Well. I have two objects to accomplish. You may meditate upon them in perfect security, for I have avowed them repeatedly to Mallex. The first is a dissolution of partnership, without incurring the enmity of my partner; the second a reconciliation with my

nephew, Ned Lorn, and restitution of his father's and his uncle's estates. You can do nothing, I fear, towards accomplishing the first; and until it be effected, nothing can be done in the other. You can meditate upon them. The point to be carried is the acquiescence of Mallex. Upon his mind the first impression is to be made. Convince him that his interest, his comfort, his safety, will not be injuriously affected by the separation, and you will have done a good work, that shall not go unrewarded. I have no other disclosure to make. What Mallex will impart to you I know not. But until he concurs in the arrangement, it would be useless for you or myself to have any correspondence with my nephew or his friends." Eugene then departed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE LITERARY LION.

THERE was a large party of the rich and the fashionable, those of aristocratic pretensions, and others of distinction, whether by the sword, the pen, or the fiddlestick, assembled at the magnificent mansion of Jabez Pringle, a retired manufacturer in the great city of New York. Mrs. Pringle was an exceedingly handsome and accomplished lady, and certainly employed the enormous fortune of her yielding lord in a philosophic manner, viz.: in the procurement of the rational enjoyments which wealth can purchase. She had a discriminating taste, and in the promotion of her own happiness, had made the discovery that it was necessary to contribute to the enjoyment of others. And this she did quite heartily, and without confining her bounties exclusively to the rich and gay portion of the community; for many a poor pensioner had good cause to bless her name.

In the midst of the glare of the crowded saloon, was seated a beautiful young lady, enjoying the plaudits of an

admiring circle, whom she had fascinated by the charms of her voice, and the graces of her performance at the piano. It was Alice. Blooming as the rose, and with sparkling glances evincing an acknowledgment of the delicious incense of praise so freely offered at her shrine, it was not difficult to perceive that the pomp of wealth, the vanity of fashion, had done their work; and that the once affectionate and ingenuous young girl had yielded to the endeavours of bad advisers to counteract the influences of education, and render all that was generous and ennobling in her nature subservient to the caprices of a false standard of respectability.

By the side of Alice was Elgiva, in simple, modest attire, and with the serenity of perfect self-possession and maidenly reserve depicted on her classic features. She listened in silence and suppressed astonishment to the torrent of words poured into her ear by her old schoolmate, now transformed into the gay belle. First was made to pass in review the long catalogue of her conquests. Then followed the distinguished attentions that had been paid her at Washington by the great men of the nation, and not omitting her intimacy and subsequent correspondence with Miss Z., the President's niece, for whose benefit, and at her especial request, she had consented to leave her dear mother, then in deep mourning, and accept the pressing invitation of Mrs. Pringle, which had been sent to her in Philadelphia.

"But how is your presence here to benefit Miss Z——?" asked Elgiva.

"Don't you know who is to be here to-night—the great feature of the party?"

"No. I must confess my ignorance."

"Did not Mrs. Pringle name some of the celebrities in her note of invitation?"

"Not to me. I was at New Ark, where the convention was sitting. An invitation came for the bishop, which he declined; and I suppose Mrs. P. learned from him that I was sojourning in that place. The next day I had her note, but there was no mention of the names of any of the guests to be present, except yours."

"Mine was mentioned, then. I am much obliged to her.

But Mr. Bibliopole, the book publisher, is to bring Mr. Mark Mayfield, the author of the popular novel. I wonder if they have not arrived? There is such a mob, though, one cannot see who is present. But they will come, and Mrs. P. has promised me an introduction to the author. And then, if I like him, I am to give him a letter of introduction to Miss Z——, who is passionately fond of lions, and particularly those she has a hand in making."

"Now I understand. And I shall be gratified to see this Mr. Mayfield, for I like his book."

"Oh, it is charming! Such a devoted lover, and such a glorious vindication of the 'Dishonoured!' I was speaking of it to Mr. Skimmer a while ago, who, you know, is a famous critic; but all critics must be snarlers; and so he said it was a tolerably clever production for a very young man, and sold pretty well; but it was deficient in many respects, and he could not praise it conscientiously with his pen, although the author was an intimate friend."

"I see Mrs. Pringle coming this way now," said Elgiva.

"Yes. But General M—— has stopped her. And there is Mr. Bibliopole behind her, and——Mercy on us! Is it possible Mrs. Pringle invited him?"

"Who?"

"Ned Lorn! Don't you see him there?"

"Oh, yes. And I saw him an hour ago, and conversed with him. Is it such a surprising thing that he should be here?"

"Oh, no; not at all. He is handsome enough, well educated, and quite agreeable. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly I do. And I was very glad to meet him so unexpectedly. I knew he was in the city, but did not expect to see him here."

"I suppose you meet him very often at Summerton?"

"Yes. In a village like ours, one sees one's friends quite frequently. They meet at all events once a week at church."

"At church! That's the best place for the young ladies to meet the young gentlemen! Heigh ho! He was my first beau!"

"And of course the first to be discarded."

"Yes. He had no fortune, no friends, no name. It was not eligible in any way. I wonder he had the impudence to aspire, and I the simplicity to listen to him."

"I thought there was a mutual attachment."

"There was. It was what they call 'puppy love'—and truly he was a puppy to approach me as he did with tenders of eternal constancy! He! I suppose you have heard his history?"

"Yes. But the version I had was not calculated to produce a contemptuous opinion of his merits."

"There are two versions. I had mine from the honourable Mr. Mallex, who you know is a member of the President's cabinet."

"And an enemy of Mr. Lorn, I believe; and interested in keeping the young man out of his fortune. I had my version from the bishop; and I am convinced it is the correct one."

"We wont quarrel about it!" said Alice, smiling significantly. "Only look! There's General M——, Mr. B——, Mr. W——, Mr. H——, forming a group around Ned, and introducing him to the ladies! What *can* it mean? Now he comes this way," she added, after a long pause, "following Mr. Bibliopole and Mrs. Pringle."

Mrs. Pringle introduced Mr. Bibliopole to Alice and Elgiva. Then the publisher proceeded to introduce our hero; but before he had time to speak, he perceived with some surprise that they were already acquainted.

The greeting of the young ladies was cordial enough, and Ned was quite unembarrassed in their presence. He lingered near them several minutes, and until he was led away by some of his new acquaintances.

"Mrs. Pringle!" cried Alice, almost angrily.

"My dearest Alice, what is the matter?"

"Did you not promise that Mr. Mayfield should be present this evening?"

"Certainly. And has not Mr. Bibliopole introduced him?"

"Such was my intention," said the publisher, "but it appears that they were already acquainted."

"Already acquainted!" cried Alice, in unaffected surprise. "How do you know that? When did you see us together?"

"Pardon me," said Mr. Bibliopole, smiling, "I see how it is. It has only been a few days since the author of 'The Dishonoured' abandoned his *non de plume*. Mr. Mayfield is no other than Mr. Edward Lorn."

"Mercy on us! *Can* it be possible?" cried Alice.

"I think it very likely," said Elgiva, with an enthusiastic glow upon her face. "I am *sure* it is so, since Mr. Bibliopole vouches for it. And, indeed, from certain peculiar expressions in the book I have been inclined to suspect as much when listening to similar ones in Mr. Lorn's conversation."

"What will Miss Z—— think?" said Alice, half abstractedly.

"She will be likely to think it a very interesting discovery," said Elgiva, "when she learns that the author was recently in Washington, and probably very near her frequently."

"No; I can't sing!" said Alice, to some one who desired to hear her voice. I am not very well. I must retire, Mrs. Pringle, if you please—but I will slip away without being observed."

She did so. And when she was entirely out of sight, Elgiva was joined by our hero.

"I forgot, Miss Bloomville," said he, "to inquire about Charles's health. I hope you have seen him or heard of him since I left home. He promised to write; but if he has done so, I have failed to receive his letters."

"I did hear there was a recurrence of the hemorrhage," said Elgiva, sadly, "the evening before I left town. I wished to mention it; but had no opportunity."

"Poor Charles!" said Ned, while a tear trembled in his eye. "I fear the hemorrhage will prove fatal this time. I will return to-morrow—I wish it could be to-night. He must be low indeed, not to write to me. I fear the worst. But he is prepared. He poured out his whole heart the last evening I was with him. Oh, he is too good, too pure to live!"

"I met him once at Viola's grave," said Elgiva. "I knew not till then who it was besides myself frequented the spot to scatter flowers on the earth where that sweet angel reposes. He must have loved her well!"

"He did!" said Ned.

"And perhaps the anguish occasioned by her untimely death may have hastened the period of his own."

"Undoubtedly it has contributed to that result. He confessed as much to me."

"His love must have commenced at an early age. Viola was quite young when she died; and from the time she came to the Hall, she never returned to her home. He could not have seen her often there; and during the vacations she and I were almost inseparable. What he imparted to you, was, I suppose, in confidence."

"It was. One other, only, was to be permitted to know his secret, and that was Elgiva."

"Me? I am all anxiety to hear it. He may safely confide in me. I see him sinking to the grave as poor Viola did; and I pity him. More than that, Mr. Lorn, I do not hesitate to say I feel an affection for the unfortunate youth—not that affection felt for a lover—but the kind a sister feels for a brother. It is the same species of attachment I had for Viola, who doubtless possessed his whole heart, and worthily possessed it."

"Viola was his sister," said Ned.

"His sister!" exclaimed Elgiva.

Ned repeated the narrative of Charles.

"The resemblance," said Elgiva, "which I so often remarked, should have convinced me they were relatives. Oh yes! Tell him I will continue to visit the grave of Viola. And if—no, it cannot be spoken. It will not do to say to him I will strew flowers on his own grave. But I will say it to you. You may tell him, however, that since Viola is gone, Elgiva feels for him a sister's esteem; and would lament as a sister his untimely end."

"It will cheer him. I know from the first time he beheld you, he has not ceased to express his admiration. His sister doubtless mentioned you in her letters as her dearest friend."

"It must have been so," replied Elgiva, musingly. "It was so, I am sure! I remember, now, how affectionately she used to speak of her brother, and she described him as a laborious student. They will soon meet again! Why, why did he not inform me of this before?"

"He feared to do it."

"Feared?"

"He said he could not trust his heart; and he would not worship where the object of his adoration was unattainable. But he could dream with impunity. His visions were harmless."

"It is well—perhaps. But he should have had a sister's care in his illness—at least for the sake of Viola. In you, however, he found a brother. I am glad he has not been wholly neglected. Will you oblige me, Mr. Lorn, when you return, by writing me concerning his condition? He may be poor—in distress——"

"No! He has been frugal. He has not suffered for want of means."

"Forgive me. I might have known as much, knowing you were his friend. Poor youth! I can do no more than pity him. And yet he will soon be in a better world, and with one dearer to him than I could have been. You are melancholy, and I do not wonder at it. When he has departed let us visit——" she could say no more.

"Let us visit their graves together," added Ned, comprehending her. "Charles is a poet, whose name will survive. And an early death has often been the sad fate of the sons of genius."

They arose. And Elgiva accepted the attentions of our hero, who conducted her to her carriage, where he was rewarded at parting by a slight pressure of his hand. He then made inquiry if it were practicable for him to return to Summerton that night. But it was too late!

CHAPTER XLIV.

BURIAL OF THE POET.

THE poor poet had expired. There were but three witnesses present at the moment of dissolution—Mrs. Kale, and two holy men in gowns, from the college. Charles was a regularly inducted member of the church, and had the benefit of the comfortable assurances which the ministers were authorized to pronounce.

Ned, Elgiva, the bishop, and even Susan, were absent. Susan had been suddenly called to Philadelphia by Mr. Persever, who desired her presence with great urgency.

When it was all over, and life pronounced to be extinct, Tim and Timothy came to watch over the corpse of Ned's friend. No others were there, except the undertakers, for the poet loved seclusion, and sought only the society of the few who could fully and freely sympathize with him. He had heard that numbers in the world regarded the poet's occupation as an idle employment, and the poet himself as but little better than a vagabond; and the sensitive youth would not willingly offend the sight of the more practical members of society, whose thoughts are generally of dollars in their cordial greeting.

It was the same at the hour of burial. The two holy men—one of them from a distant land, for many of the professors of the collegiate institutions were priests, and most of the nations were represented—the two undertakers, and the two Tims—these were all, besides Mrs. Kale, the poor widow, who were in attendance.

At the appointed hour the coffin was lifted up by the four men and borne out into the road, preceded by the priests with open prayer books, and followed by Mrs. Kale, the solitary mourner.

The sky was overcast with a pall of dense and dark vapour. All was silent. No winds ruffled the pendent leaves; no bird warbled a tuneful note.

They proceeded slowly and mutely along the deserted path, until the swelling bosom of the poor widow found relief in the utterance of her feelings.

"He was beautiful," said she, in low solemn murmurs, "and as pure as an angel. If he had been my own son, I could not have loved him more. All who knew him loved him. And he loved everybody. When he suffered most, he smiled the sweetest. And his last words were that he was going to his father in heaven, where there would be no more suffering, and where he would meet his dear sister, beside whose grave he desired us to lay him. And he prayed for his mother, whom he had never mentioned before."

Then the poor widow's utterance was checked by her sobs; and one of the priests raising his book read aloud a few sentences.

"He died in glory," resumed the widow, when the priest had lowered the book, "and this morning, when I looked at his smooth pale face, the sweet smile was still upon his lips. He died after the great storm was over. The lightning had flashed, and the thunder had rolled. They had passed away. The bright drops of rain, like the dew of the morning, quivered upon the leaves and the flowers, after the clouds were lifted up far in the west. And when the sun streamed through the casement, he begged me to raise his head that he might gaze upon the glorious scene. He kissed my cheek as he lay upon my shoulder. Then the sun went down, and he closed his eyes. They were closed forever!"

"I must stop a minute," said Timothy Hay. "He's as light as a feather, I know; but I'm as weak as a baby."

The coffin was placed upon the grass near a tuft of wild roses, while the stalwart farmers leaned over it and wept like children. The priests turned away their faces, unable to read for their tears. Even the undertakers hung down their heads in real sorrow.

"Now I am strong again," said Timothy, after the lapse of a few minutes. The coffin was lifted up once more and borne slowly along by the four men, preceded by the holy men and followed by the mourner.

"Everything loved him," resumed the widow. "There was a little bird that used to sing in the woodbine near the window. He fed it every day, and it got to be so gentle that it would perch upon his shoulder. And when he was

too ill to go to it, the little creature would fly in and hop upon the bed. This morning, when I opened the window, the poor little bird had its breast pressed against the sash, its wings spread out, and its head hanging down."

"Dead?" asked Tim, bringing the procession to a sudden halt, and turning round towards the poor widow.

"Yes, indeed! As cold and stiff as the sweet youth himself!"

"I—I'm tired—no—but as weak as water," said Tim, with suffused eyes, "and must rest a little."

Again the bier was put down by the way-side, and the little group stood around it in silence.

Ere long the widow ceased to utter her lamentations, and during the remainder of the distance the coffin was borne along without interruption. The service was solemnly performed, and the body was lowered into the grave, which had been prepared adjoining Viola's. When the clods rattled upon the coffin, the last outburst of sorrow proceeded from the widow, and then the son of genius was left reposing beside the sister he had loved so well.

An hour afterwards Ned was weeping over the grave of his friend. He had been too late! A week after, a crown of laurel rested upon the turf above the poet's head, placed there by the lily hands of the fair Elgiva. Such is the poet's doom!

CHAPTER XLV.

THE QUADRUPLE ALLIANCE—DOWNFALL OF THE TYRANT.

THE secretary was in the zenith of his glory. Hitherto everything had prospered under his hands. His expectations had been mostly realized, or seemed to be in the process of realization.

He was standing in the centre of the most spacious saloon of the fine mansion he had recently purchased, and surrounded by many of the great men of the nation, for

whom he had prepared a princely entertainment. Experienced statesmen had owned that Mallex possessed extraordinary administrative talents; for, truly, he seemed to comprehend the official duties of his position, and they were promptly performed in all their details. The resolutions of Congress were never neglected by him, and no important information called for long delayed, as had been so frequently the case with some of the other heads of departments. A man of business himself, he was admirably calculated to have the labours pertaining to his subordinates efficiently performed. And while he kept his wheel of the government in motion, he still found the time, and possessed the capacity, to keep in active operation his own *imperium in imperio*. Fawner, his most available instrument in the accomplishment of his selfish projects, now spent much of his time in the federal city. Very large sums had been repeatedly realized by them in the award of government contracts; in the bestowal of the printing; in commissions for the procurement of appointments; and, above all, from foreign manufacturers, to whom however, they failed to render the equivalents which had been stipulated between them—but there was no remedy, no means of coercing restitution.

Flushed with pecuniary success, flattered by the attentions of the great politicians, and idolized by the multitude of hungry seekers of office, the great man strode hither and thither in his magnificent mansion, with a proud smile and an undaunted brow.

As the evening wore on, however, and the hilarity of his guests increased, the smile of the secretary gradually faded away, for hitherto he had listened in vain for the announcement of the name of the President. And as he became grave, the corpse-like features of Fawner seemed to relax, and to assume an unwonted animation.

“Be careful, Fawner!” said he, aside, when happening to witness an outburst of exhilaration on the part of his creature. “Beware of the wine. It has been known to make even old men imprudently garrulous.”

“The older the man the more prudent the politician, and the more careful the capitalist, if you please, sir. I am older than you, sir; but not so rich.”

“Enough. But you are rich, nevertheless. Perhaps too rich. The President is not here.”

"No, I haven't seen him."

"You utterit lightly, and carelessly. *Too rich*, I fear, Fawner. But he who creates may destroy. I say the President is not here, and it is getting late."

"Very true, sir."

"It is undeniably true! Why don't he come?"

"Why don't he come? I wonder why he don't come!"

"Fawner, you are drunk! Drink no more wine." Saying this angrily, the great man, assuming an air of ease which he could no longer feel, joined the favoured guests he was so sumptuously entertaining.

Fawner had not tasted wine that night. And he knew perfectly well why the President did not make his appearance on the occasion.

The old man had been too long buffeted by "outrageous fortune," had too often lamented his impotent poverty, and too ardently prayed for an accumulation of wealth, to run the hazard of losing what he had acquired in his old age. And having amassed already quite as much as he perceived it was the intention and the policy of his patron to permit him to accumulate, he had taken such measures to secure his gains as his careful mind deemed to be effectual.

He had intimated to Eugene Bainton his purpose to withdraw from the service of Mallex; and the suggestion was not only cordially approved, but the confidence was reciprocated on the part of Eugene by a declaration that the strongest desire of his heart was to be likewise detached from his partner. Even Radley, convinced that, separately, he could never circumvent the superior mind of his employer, and hence could never gain any considerable recompense in his service, was taken into the consultation, under the stipulated guarantee of an ample compensation in the event of the success of the justifiable conspiracy. And such, unquestionably, was the proper term. For it instantly became apparent to them all, that to avoid being involved in disaster by the machinations of Mallex, it was indispensably necessary to compass his destruction. Overtures were made to Persever, with the professed object of accomplishing the great man's ruin, and subsequently of an entire relinquishment of the estates of the Parkes. Persever, being assured of the co-operation of Bainton and

Fawner, pledged himself to secrecy with the protestation that his demands in favour of his client were legitimately and justly founded. He could conscientiously co-operate in the righteous scheme for the overthrow of the bold bad man, and heartily promised to do so. He had already obtained, by the efforts of Lucy, an imperfect narration of the crimes of Mallex, so far as they had come to the knowledge of Mrs. Sutly. The old hag merely suppressed her agency in the murder of Daniel L. Parke; but she was willing to depose that he had been murdered, and by the direction of Mallex. The manner of the act she described with some degree of vagueness and without circumstantiality. This was shocking enough to her daughter, and a startling revelation for Persever. But he was silent. The elucidation of the mystery of the certificate of Dr. Drastic, asserting positively that Ned Lorn Parke had expired in the house of refuge, was the matter in which he was the most immediately concerned. The wretched woman declared that the boy who died, and whom she represented to the doctor as Ned, had been lame for several years, produced by an enormous enlargement of the knee joint. And with this intelligence Persever had waited upon Dr. Drastic, who admitted that he had made no examination at the time, and further declared that if the old matron's tale were true, it would be confirmed by an exhumation of the body so carefully buried by the bankers. Such were the items Persever was enabled to contribute to the general stock of destructive material, which the enemies of Mallex were preparing for his ruin. A sort of quadruple treaty was signed by the four men, and henceforth they were pledged to act in harmony. The claims of Susan and Dick were alike withdrawn. And it was in pursuance of this policy that Persever had sent to Summerton for Susan, to whom certain explanations were made, and who readily, even in the absence of Ned—who was to be directly benefited by the withdrawal of her claim—sanctioned the arrangement. Dick, of course, was not consulted. But he did not fail to inform Radley, almost daily, that his witnesses were forgetting more and more of their testimony, and that if the cakes were not hurried up, all the advances that had been made him might be as so much money thrown away.

When the last of the guests had departed from the great cabinet minister's soiree, the perturbed secretary, placing his hand rudely upon the shoulder of Fawner, said —

"He was not here, sir!"

"Who do you mean?" asked Fawner, brusquely, and at the same time extricating himself from the spasmodic grasp of his patron.

"Who do I mean? The President, sir! Who do I mean! If you were not sodden with wine, you would know who I mean."

"Am I responsible for his absence?" asked Fawner, concealing the feeble smile that corrugated his thin lips.

"You should have known the cause. Have we not a spy at his door? Why have you not seen him?" Fawner remained silent; and Mallex continued, "But no matter. He can know nothing. I know all of *his* intrigues. He will not, he *durst* not, be openly hostile. Go, Fawner—forget my harsh language. My mind is burdened too much. There is something hatching against me in Philadelphia. I suspect Radley. Tell Eugene to keep an eye upon him. Go, Fawner; you have been almost stupefied by the wine. I forgive you. Come to the office at 10 o'clock to-morrow. The chief clerk will not be an eavesdropper again, nor shall Spring admit any of the lions to frighten you. Good night. Take a Seidletz powder." Saying this the great man turned about and promenaded the saloon alone, while Fawner glided over to the White House, and obtained admission to the President, even in his bedroom. The words spoken were few, but the President decided upon his course. The servant whom Mallex supposed to be his spy was called up; a sealed envelope, without superscription, was placed in his hand; and he was directed to deliver it to Mallex in person and without a moment's delay. Fawner accompanied the messenger, and waited at a distance in the obscurity of the darkness, until he returned from the secretary's door, and assured him that he had placed the envelope in the hands of the secretary himself. Then the old man sought his lodgings and slept soundly.

Mallex stood beneath a large chandelier and gazed at

the broad seal of the President. He tore open the envelope, convulsively, and gazed upon a page of charges, to which there was no signature attached. But he recognized the hand-writing of the President.

The paper contained a long catalogue of his offences. Of the bribes he had received; of the treacherous bargains he had made with politicians and political writers for his own elevation; of his secret efforts to defeat the measures of the administration, even those he had approved in cabinet council; of the removal of the President's sincere supporters from office; of the appointment of his enemies; and of his agency in the procurement of attacks upon his colleagues, by members of Congress, and in the columns of newspapers in the interest of the opposition. That was all. There were no words of comment, no reproaches. The catalogue of his offences in the hand-writing of the President sufficed.

The paper fell from his hand. The blood rushed to his head, and he fell prostrate and insensible on the floor.

Then one who had been watching him glided in noiselessly, and tearfully bent over him. It was Tom—his humpbacked son, who had been an inmate of his establishment since the liberation of Mrs. Sutly from the prison-room of his country mansion.

Tom applied restoratives, and strove to lift his heavy parent from the floor.

"It is useless, Tom," said Mallex, recovering. "You are too weak. Put out some of the lights. The glare is painful. Give me wine."

Tom did his bidding.

"Tom!" continued the fallen secretary, his head propped by cushions brought from a sofa, "I will soon recover. Close the doors. We must not be seen by the servants."

"They are all asleep," said Tom.

"It is well. But we must not trust them. Trust nobody, Tom—nobody, nobody, nobody! All, all are false, false, false! I would not trust you, Tom, if you were not my son. But what assurance have you of that fact? I will make 'assurance doubly sure.' Bring me pen, ink, and paper. I am strong now!" he continued, rising, and approaching a table, while Tom placed the writing materials

before him. He then wrote a full acknowledgment of his son's legitimacy, and declaration that if he died without other issue, Tom was to be his sole heir.

"Tom!" said he, "rouse up the coachman, O'Connor, and bring him hither." Tom obeyed in silence. "O'Connor," said the secretary, when the coachman appeared, "behold me sign this instrument of writing. Now sign it yourself, as a witness, and be ready at any time in future, to swear it is genuine."

The coachman obeyed, and then returned to his couch, not at all astonished at anything done by his imperious lord and master.

"Take it, Tom," said Mallex. "Preserve it. It is more complete than the former document signed by me. Now I may rely upon your co-operation, at least in defeating the devices of my enemies who would bring me to an ignominious end. Fear not that I will lead you into crime. You have seen its consequences, and may witness more. You will profit by the lesson. But I—there is no escape for me. I cannot restore the dead. I will not retrace my steps—my march is onward!"

"You might be forgiven, sir," said Tom, "if you sincerely——"

"What? Repented? I do repent! Or rather regret the necessity that existed, or appeared to exist for the perpetration of the crimes I have committed: but that does no good. Repentance! No! Defiance is now the word! But there is danger, Tom. If the old hag should fall into the hands of my enemies, they might hang me, sir! Go back to Philadelphia, and become a spy again—a double spy. Convince them that you are my enemy, and that will entitle you to their confidence. They will never suspect you to be my son. Go! I will join you soon, and then let them beware!"

Tom did not close his eyes during the remainder of the night; and before the dawn of day was seated silently in the cars among the passengers travelling northward.

The next day Mallex was seated in his office as usual, with a calm brow, but determined aspect.

Spring came in and said Mr. Fawner awaited his pleasure. By a motion he was directed to admit him.

When the shrivelled old creature of avarice appeared, Mallex leaned back in his great chair and regarded him in silence. He scrutinized his features and form from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, as an amateur might examine a statue. And the old man withstood the inspection without trepidation—for his investments had been securely made.

"You are guilty!" at length said Mallex, in a deep, deliberate intonation. "You have betrayed me. No one else could have given the information. You are silent. You do not deny it. Receive the reward of an ungrateful traitor!" Mallex took a pistol from a drawer of the table at his side, and cocking it, aimed at the heart of the old man.

"If you kill me," said the unmoved Fawner, "the report of the pistol will be heard, and witnesses will rush in. I was your instrument used for the destruction of others. The knife has wounded your hand. Why not cast it away from you and be done with it? Would it be wise to break the blade, when its point would inevitably rebound into your own heart?"

"No!" said Mallex, replacing the pistol. "You are right. An old man for wisdom. I take your advice, in part. I will spare your life, but I will not throw you aside until I see you enclosed in the almshouse! That will be the most terrible punishment. Why do you smile?"

"We have discovered the manner of Daniel L. Parke's death!" was the imperturbable reply. At this announcement the limbs of the huge villain trembled violently. His chin fell, and a deathly pallor spread over his face.

"Radley, Bainton, Persever and myself—we all know it," continued Fawner.

"Am I to be arrested? Tried?"

"It will depend upon circumstances."

"Name them! Name them!"

"Messenger from the President of the United States!" cried Spring, throwing open the door and admitting the man, who placed a note in the hands of the secretary. He tore off the envelope, which covered two papers. One was simply as follows—"We await your resignation." The

other was the form of the resignation—attributing the determination to urgent private affairs and ill health—and both in the well known hand of the President.

Mallex took up a pen, and in silence signed his resignation, sealed it, and handed it to the messenger, who withdrew.

“That you consent to the withdrawal of your partner from the establishment in Philadelphia.”

“I consent.”

“That you make no opposition to the claim of Edward Lorn Parke to the estates of his father and his *deceased* uncle.”

“I will make none. But the money must be refunded by Bainton.”

“That you will pay Radley’s fee without question or demurrer.”

“I will.”

“That you sign this paper, authorizing the three respectable and responsible citizens therein named to settle the affairs of the banking house, and other business in which Mr. Bainton may be interested.”

“I will sign,” said Mallex, reading the paper. “My share of the proceeds is to be rendered me, and the men named are competent and trustworthy. But why should agents be employed?”

“You will learn. These stipulations are our ultimatum. We are all agreed.”

“I’ll sign!” said Mallex. “Here, Spring, witness my signature. You need not read it!” It was signed and witnessed.

“Next, and finally,” said Fawner, when Spring had retired, “you must agree to shut yourself up in your country house, under the pretence of illness, and see nobody.”

“Nobody?”

“Dr. Castor may visit you, and you may have your housekeeper, and Tom Denny.”

“Well. I see no objection to that. Castor will fill the papers with rumours of a mental malady, which will blind the public to the real cause of my retirement, and furnish a plausible pretext for winding up my affairs. Is there anything else?”

"Nothing from the allies. But this from me. For many years I have performed the disreputable drudgery assigned me. Taking advantage of my necessities, you have led me into the commission of many grievous acts—though not deadly crimes—sufficient to draw down upon me the disapprobation of the congregation of which I was a member. I intend to make my peace with the church, and I warn you against throwing any obstacles in the way. Hitherto I have been your obedient slave—hereafter I shall be your master!"

"Good! Have you any further commands?"

"Yes. Send by telegraph for Dr. Castor, and accompany him to the place of your future abode without delay."

"Your orders shall be obeyed, sir." Mallex then arose, and taking his hat, walked gravely, and still preserving some show of official dignity, through the crowd of visitors without, who were waiting to pay their respects to him. He returned the respectful bows of such of the subordinate functionaries of the government as he happened to meet with on his way to his mansion; and none but those interested in preserving the secret of his discomfiture, could have supposed that any extraordinary occurrence had transpired.

Arrived at his mansion, he threw himself upon his couch, and despatched his coachman with the message which had been dictated to him to the telegraph office, in literal obedience of the order he had received from the treacherous minion of his own creation.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE OLD SONG.

NED and Susan were sitting together in the little parlour, discussing the probable intentions of Persever, who had recently requested the latter to narrate, in writing,

every circumstance she could remember in relation to the history of the former. He had begged Susan not to interrogate him as to his object, and neither she nor Ned had heard anything more of the matter since the statement had been sent him. The lawyer had resolved never again to excite any expectations which he was not almost certain would be realized. And although the recent events at Washington seemed to afford the desired certainty, yet he determined not to communicate any intelligence of it to Summerton, until the business should be upon the eve of a final consummation. Therefore the secret of the intended dissolution, and of the determination of Eugene Bainton to make restitution to his nephew, had been as yet confined to the few who were mainly instrumental in the production of such momentous results.

"By jingo!" cried Tim, springing into the room, during a pause in the conversation. "I've got some good news for you."

"What is it?" asked both Susan and Ned.

"Dick Sutly aint such a ingrained rascal as I thought."

"No, indeed he aint," said Timothy Hay, appearing at the door, to substantiate the assertion of his friend.

"Why do you think so?" asked Ned. "Has he not laid claim to my uncle's estate, pretending to be his son?"

"That was the gammon of the lawyer," said Tim. "But he's had a falling out with the lawyer, and he says if you'll do what's liberal with him when you're rich, he wont appear agin you."

"Yes," said Timothy Hay, "and he's confessed to me and Tim that the tale was all a humbug, and that he never was the son of Mr. Parke, who wasn't any kin to him."

"And we two will swear to it in court as witnesses," continued Tim.

"This confession may be of some importance," said Ned, with interest. "I do not see, with such a denial on his part, what further obstacle can be thrown in your way, Susan."

In *your* way, Ned. I have no right to anything. All

is yours. Like Dick, I will not appear against you." Susan smiled, being already aware of the withdrawal of Dick's pretensions as well as her own.

"Not against me, but against those who would withhold the estate from the rightful heir. But where is Dick? I must see him."

"He's just outside of the door, said Timothy Hay. 'He wouldn't come in,' he said, 'till he was sure you wouldn't be mad with him.' It was the same thing out at my house. Lord bless you, I wasn't mad with him when I gave him the thrashing for deserting his mammy."

Ned had Dick called in, who confirmed fully what the Tims had said of him. Dick had long since discovered it was not the intention of any of the parties interested, to bring his claim to a trial; and having quarrelled with both his mother and Radley, he had returned to his family. His wife had contrived to obtain possession of a portion of the money advanced by the speculating lawyer, and being a better financier than Dick, he was now dependent on her bounty for the little sums indispensable in his daily transactions.

Ned, however, conceiving this step of Dick to be the effect of an honest and spontaneous impulse, did not hesitate to make him promises of compensation in the event named. And he thanked the two Tims for the unflagging interest they manifested in his welfare.

When left quite alone, Ned hastened to communicate his information to Persever by letter, resolving not to go to the city again until his presence should be demanded. Susan permitted him to remain in ignorance of the arrangement she had sanctioned, and of the fact that Dick's claim had been already withdrawn.

At the post-office he met with Elgiva, for whom a letter had come from Alice.

"Did you know," said she, as they returned together, "that Alice and I have resumed our old habit of corresponding?"

"I did not, indeed," said Ned. "But it will not surprise me to hear it is so. Nothing surprises me, now."

"This is the third letter," said Elgiva, looking at the superscription, "I have received from her since we parted

in New York. Such trifling incidents I know are not often named to a third party. But I believe Alice would not be offended if she knew you had been made acquainted with a portion of the contents of her letters; for all of them, so far, contain allusions, and not unfriendly ones, to you."

"To me?" exclaimed Ned. "What new phase is this?"

"You mean on fair Cynthia's face; or, in plain English, the change of the moon, which you suppose to be symbolical of woman's nature."

"Not of all—but of Alice's. They have ceased to have any influence on me. I would rather worship some fixed star, even at a hopeless distance, that always twinkles the same feeble ray, than to share with others the power of controlling the moon. Yet I confess I have some curiosity to know what Alice can say of me."

"If you can confine your ideas down to earth, and earthly things, and will accompany me home, I will see if I have not some message for you from the great belle."

Ned readily agreed, for it had been no unusual thing for him to spend his evenings, since the death of Charles, in the company of Elgiva.

After our hero departed from New York, upon learning his friend was so desperately ill, Alice had seen Elgiva repeatedly, and had often referred to the attachment which once subsisted between Ned and herself. And as she could not rationally account for the subsequent estrangement but by depreciating his character, she did not hesitate to hurl detractions at his head. Yet she admitted his merit; and desiring her injurious imputations to be considered confidential, intimated a purpose of re-establishing friendly relations with him—*merely* friendly relations. And hence her letters to Elgiva, who could easily perceive the object of the correspondence on the part of the belle, was to facilitate a renewal of familiar intercourse, perhaps not with Ned Lorn, but certainly with the author of "The Dishonoured." Her first letter, however, informed Elgiva, that some of the things alleged against Ned, she had just heard contradicted, and on such authority as to make her doubt whether there was a particle of truth in any of the tales which had been for years repeated to his disadvantage. Her second declared her conviction that Ned had been from

the beginning the victim of atrocious calumniators. The third letter was not as yet opened.

When they reached the mansion, the subject was not renewed until they found themselves alone in the parlour. The sun had descended in a clear sky, and the full moon now poured its silvery rays into the open window. Elgiva, seated at the piano, could easily distinguish both the notes and the words of the music by the light of "fair Cynthia," as she smilingly termed it.

"And that reminds me," said Ned, "of the fickle Alice."

"Yes. You shall read two of her letters by moonlight. You will see that permission is given me to read them to you. And while you are perusing them, I will see the contents of the one just received."

This one contained a pressing invitation from Alice and her mother (although the latter was still in mourning) for Elgiva and Ned to visit their mansion in the city, where, Alice assured them, they should have the pleasure of meeting with Miss Z——, the President's niece. This letter likewise communicated the news of the cause of Mallex's resignation. Dr. Castor had informed her mother (in the strictest confidence) that it was a mental malady with which the ex-secretary was afflicted, and from which it was doubtful whether he would ever recover. And she said her mother was *particularly* anxious to see Ned at her house, as he had *always* been a great favourite of hers.

Without a word of comment Ned returned the two letters, and in silence received and perused the third one.

"The moon shines brightly, now," said Elgiva, significantly.

"It will change anon; but no matter. I have become accustomed to vicissitudes. My life has been a succession of changes—hopes and disappointments. Oh, that my lot were once unalterably fixed!"

"It seems to me that an opportunity for it is now furnished, if I may be a judge of the signification of the intimations thrown out by one of my own sex."

"Alice cannot influence my destiny. Her mind has been perverted in the world of fashion, and the sensibilities of her heart deadened by the vices of an ambition to excel—to excel in the number of conquests, in the brilliancy of

display, and in the aristocracy of her associates. Doubtless she feels a stronger attachment for this Miss Z—— than she could experience for any man; and simply because she is the relative of a President. And what now are our Presidents, that even their remote kindred should be entitled to such adulation? Formerly great and good men were elevated to the highest positions in the government. Now the high places are debased to the degraded level of unworthy men—demagogues and profligates! But, pardon me, I am talking politics to a lady. Will you not oblige me by singing that simple and pathetic song, “’Twas ever thus,” &c. It is the sweetest composition, and the most touchingly truthful, of the modern English poets.”

“Oh yes. Ah, no!” said Elgiva, gliding to a window opening on the piazza. A better warbler has forestalled me!”

“Charming!” exclaimed our hero, following lightly, and listening to the song of a mocking bird perched among the woodbine on the trellis. “The very air I named!” continued Ned, in a soft whisper, taking the unresisting hand of Elgiva.

“Very nearly,” said she, smiling. “I have repeated it so often for you at this hour, that the bird has learned it.”

“Can it be possible!”

“Oh yes. They can be taught to imitate even the most difficult strains in the operas, by constantly hearing them repeated.”

“But has this bird heard my favourite song repeated so very often?” asked Ned.

“I must confess to having practiced it alone, at the still hour of night, when all but the bird and myself were slumbering.”

“And think you none other watched with sleepless eye at that silent hour?”

“How should I know?”

“Be assured then that the sweet sounds were still ringing in my ears.”

“Oh, if they rob you of your rest, why should you desire to hear them again?”

“They robbed me of nothing but my cares. I was soothingly wafted to a species of elysium in which I would

have dwelt forever. Oh, that I might possess such a sweet songster as this!"

"Would it be so difficult?" asked Elgiva, still gazing out at the trellis, although the bird had ceased its song.

"Perhaps not—to obtain such a bird. But—but it was not the bird I referred to. Often have I been ready to believe that the clouds were about to be swept away from my life's horizon—that the name and fortune to which I was entitled might be claimed and possessed—and then the impulse of my heart was to lay everything at the feet of—of—but no! the gleams of hope were delusive; the clouds again enveloped all in gloom, and nothing but the cheering success attending my poor efforts in literature, has rescued me from utter despair."

"Nothing else—no other hope?"

"There *was* another hope—I fear a presumptuous one—encouraged by what I supposed to be a sympathy on the part of—why should I not express it?—on the part of Elgiva, at least in my misfortunes."

"And why not in your future prosperity?" asked Elgiva, still permitting her hand to remain in his.

"I feared to hope it in the sense I wished. Oh, Elgiva! would it were so!"

"Then it is so!" said she, in a low but distinct voice, her drooping head touching his shoulder.

"Blessings on you! For I may be still doomed to disappointment, as it regards fortune and——"

"Fortune!" said she, interrupting him. "If that were all required for happiness, do I not possess it? But it is not so!"

"No it is not so. But the charge of fraud, the stain of ignominy——"

"Never could be attached to you!" said she with emphasis. "He who has fixed principles of morality founded upon the divine laws; whose conduct has won the approbation of those who know him best; and whose talents have achieved distinction—surely such an one need not lament the deficiency of fortune, or fear that the slanders of mercenary foes can ever prevail against him."

"And is such your belief—your decision? Oh, Elgiva! My fortunes, such as they are, and may be—my heart—

my hand—are earnestly, eagerly, tendered you! I await, at this silent hour, the response which is to seal my happiness or misery.” Her head pressed more heavily on his shoulder, and the arm that encircled her was not repulsed. “Speak!” continued he, “or let your silence——”

“No, I will not be silent,” said she. “If the old attachment for Alice——”

“Oh, be assured it has long since been utterly obliterated!”

“Then, Ned, I am yours!” said she. “Yours for life and eternity!”

During the interval of silence which ensued, the mocking bird sang again, but in a more cheerful strain.

“Elgiva!” said Ned, smiling, “the bird is witness of our vows!”

“And the air is less plaintive. A favourable augury! Adieu, now; it is very late. Will you sleep more soundly than usual?”

“Certainly more blissfully. And may pleasant dreams bless my Elgiva!”

And thus they parted, while the bird continued to pour forth its song among the dewy flowers.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE MONSTER'S DOOM.

“HA! ha! ha! hah! Good! Go on, Tom! And so Miss Z—— didn't arrive, nor the literary fledgling from Summerton either? Ha! ha! ha!” Such were the spasmodic explosions of the half frantic Mallex, as he sat in the library at his country house.

“Neither, sir, I was present when the letter from Miss Z—— was read. It stated that it had been ascertained the late secretary of —— was soon to espouse Mrs. Lonsdale; and inasmuch as the relations subsisting between the President and the ex-secretary were not such as to

render it desirable for Miss Z—— to continue on terms of intimacy with Mrs. L., or any member of her family, she therefore declined the invitation, although she would be happy to see the young author anywhere else."

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! It was Fawner furnished that information. Take care, Fawner! But what did Alice say to that?"

"She fainted. But when consciousness returned, she sprang up and ran to her mother and demanded if it had been her determination to marry you."

"Ha! ha! ha! What did she say?"

"She admitted that such a proposition had been made by the secretary. But as he had resigned and become deranged, Miss Z—— ought to have known there was no possibility of such an event taking place. I am sure Alice had never before supposed her mother desirous of forming another matrimonial alliance."

"No. It was my will that she should know nothing of the project. Ha! ha! They'll groan, yet! I made their investments for them after Lonsdale's death. But they'll have enough to live on—to live on in poverty—and meditate on their former prosperity—the pride, and fashion, and high associates of other days! Ha! ha! go on, Tom!"

"But, sir, they never injured you."

"You don't know anything about it. Go on."

"I accompanied Dr. Drastic, Dr. Castor, Mr. Persever, Mr. Radley and Mr. Bainton to the cemetery, and witnessed the exhumation of the remains of the boy, supposed to be Ned Lorn Parke, that died at the house of refuge. The bones were not decayed, and the enlargement of the knee joint, as described by Mrs. Sutly, was instantly recognized."

"That settles the legitimacy of this Ned, who has given us so much trouble. He's to be rich, now, and his old sweetheart, who discarded him, poor! Good, again! But tell me how Bainton acted."

"He called upon heaven and earth to witness his satisfaction——"

"The infernal rascal!" cried Mallex. "He knew it before."

"And *repentance*," continued Tom, "for the wrongs he had inflicted on his nephew. He was pale, and weak, sir, and delivered into the hands of Persever all the papers necessary for a full restitution."

"The fool!"

"No, sir. The doctors, after Mr. Bainton had been placed in his carriage, said he could not survive many days; and that he was dying of consumption."

"Ha! ha! ha! Dying! That's the reward of his honesty. Dying! It serves him right. I'm glad of it!"

"They say Ned will likewise inherit his fortune."

"Certainly he will if——Tom! I'll put you in possession of half my fortune the day after you inform me this Ned died from the effects of a few inches of steel inserted between his ribs."

"Not for the wealth of the world!" cried Tom.

"I forgot, Tom; you are to die like Bainton, an honest fool. You inherited it from your mother. But are they going to take the old hag's deposition?"

"To-morrow, sir. She is ill, and it is feared she may die."

"And if she thinks she's about to die, she, too, will become honest and blurt out the whole affair! Scoundrels! Perjured dogs!" cried Mallex, rising and making gigantic strides across the room, "What more do they want? I have resigned, dissolved, permitted them to reinstate the heir of Parke—they have got the rotten bones, the money, everything, everything, everything, but my life! It is a violation of the compact—an infringement of the constitution——"

"Sir!" cried Tom, gazing in terror at the frightful aspect of his father. "Do not be so furious. I think there is no danger to be apprehended."

"Ha! ha! ha! Don't be alarmed, Tom," said he, resuming his chair. "I sha'n't go mad in reality, if I can help it. But how I happened to mention the constitution, I am unable to say. Tom, this is to be a day big with fate. Were all my letters put in the post-office?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Well, if they keep their appointments, we shall see, what we shall see. There's one of them below now. Withdraw, Tom."

Doctor Drastic entered.

"Doctor," said Mallex, "they tell me you are poor."

"I am, indeed," said the doctor, with a slight sigh, though smiling at the novelty of the remark.

"And I am rich. At this hour to-morrow you shall have my check for twenty thousand dollars——"

"What for, sir?"

"For bringing me intelligence to-night that Mrs. Sutly has breathed her last."

"Good *day*, sir!" ejaculated the doctor, snappishly, and rushing out of the house with contracted brows.

"Fool! The reason he is what they term honest, is because he has not been accustomed to temptation! A little practice, and he would be as great a rascal as the rest of us."

The next visitor whom he had summoned by letter, was Radley. The lawyer appeared before him.

"Radley," said he, "how much do you expect to realize from this work?"

"Ten thousand dollars, which you are bound to pay."

"Oh, I forgot that. That was stipulated in the treaty of capitulation. Only ten thousand! Renounce your associates, or rather betray them and work for me one little month, and you shall have twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand dollars?"

"Yes. But the old woman out at the corpse-house must be removed, quashed, silenced forever, this very night."

"I cannot do it for a million! Bainton has the forged certificate in his possession, and keeps the scrivener hid, ready to convict me! I am held by him, obedient to his will, until this business is finally settled."

"That was a blunder of mine! I should have kept it. But Bainton, you may rest assured, would never have thought of preserving it for such a purpose. It was Fawner! the viper I warmed into life to be stung by him! Kill him, kill him, Radley, and you shall have another ten thousand."

"What! be a murderer? Never! I have children!" cried he, rushing forth in horror.

"That man would not hesitate to break half the commandments in the decalogue, and we have Bible authority

for saying when one is broken all are ruptured. And it is the lawyer who can make a distinction when there is no difference! Acute as this one is, however, Dick Sutly over-reached him. Ha! ha! ha! Good day, Dick!"

Dick himself appeared at that moment.

"You got my letter, Dick?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what do you think I want with you?"

"Hanged if I know."

"I want to make your fortune. What do you consider a fortune?"

"Oh, twenty thousand dollars would be a mighty pile for me."

"You shall have it,—perhaps. Who do you suppose prevented you from receiving a quarter of a million?"

"Mr. Radley said it was you."

"Me? He's a liar!" roared the infuriated man. Dick, I'll give you ten thousand dollars to cut his throat!"

"A big fee!"

"But, Dick, it was your mother. If she had not been alive, you would have recovered the fortune. She *will* talk."

"True, sir; all creation can't keep her tongue still."

"And if she wouldn't talk willingly, they had the power to compel her to testify in court. So, with her still alive, it was impossible for you to recover."

"I shouldn't 'ave cried much, if she'd 'a died any-time these ten years. She never loved me, nor I her."

"Dick! if she were to die to-night, to-morrow you would get the twenty thousand."

"I wouldn't have any objections."

"Do you understand? If she lives till to-morrow, you can't touch a cent of it."

"Then my chance aint worth much, and I've come here for nothing."

"Don't be stupid! You know when people won't die themselves, there's a way to make them."

"Oh, now I've got the idea! See here, Mr. Mallex, I don't love my mammy, as I said before; but I wouldn't do such a thing as to murder my own flesh and blood for all the gold at the mint!"

"Couldn't you get some one else to do it for half the money?"

"I'd be guilty all the same! I've hearn my mammy say that twenty times; and I'm sure I never knew what she said it for."

"But I do. Ha! ha! ha! Well, Dick; suppose we try one that is not your own flesh and blood. I'll give the same amount for the scalp of Fawner—as much for Persever's—for Ned Lorn's—the President's!—Now, there's a chance for a splendid fortune!"

"I—I'm—frightened, sir—your big eyes scares me! Excuse me—I can't do it!"

"Begone, then!" roared the infuriated man. "Oh that it were Italy—Spain—any country but this! Ha! ha! ha! How I would slaughter them! I'll—I'll do it here! I will! I will!—Where are they?" cried he, seizing a chair and shivering it to atoms against the wall near the door, where poor Tom's face was partially seen. He seized another, and attempted to pursue him, but was pinioned from behind by four strong men whom Drs. Drastic and Castor had sent thither for that purpose. They had anticipated such a result. He was now raving mad indeed! Foaming and bellowing under the anguish of disappointed rage, to be succeeded by the torments of the fitful memories of his crimes, the monster was confined in the prison-room of his own mansion, and compelled to occupy the same couch which he had remorselessly prepared for another.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LAST SCENE OF ALL, AND FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

NED received at last a peremptory summons to the city. It was laconic, but decisive. "Meet me, without fail, at my office between 9 and 10 o'clock, A. M., to-morrow." That was all. And although both he and Susan hoped and believed that their steadfast and noble friend would this time be able to produce tangible proofs of having accomplished something for them, yet they did not indulge in conjecture, and strove to be prepared for renewed delays and further disappointments.

When Ned entered the office of his friend, he was surprised to find assembled there Drs. Drastic and Castor, Fawner and Radley.

They arose when he appeared, and Mr. Persever advanced, holding up sundry papers.

"My friend," said he, "the long struggle is over; and I have the happiness to place in your hands the documentary evidence of the legitimacy of your birth, and the duly attested authority in virtue of which you become the sole and undisputed possessor of both your father's and your uncle's estates."

Ned received the documents in silence. His tears prevented the utterance of thanks. But Persever understood the expression of his countenance, and appreciated his feelings. The announcement was sudden, if not wholly unexpected, and the matter of momentous importance.

"My uncle! Where is he?" at length asked Ned, after looking around and not finding him present.

"He is ill," said Persever. "But everything has been carefully prepared for this consummation by his direction, and of course with his hearty concurrence. It is his desire to see you."

"Then," said Dr. Castor, "we must use despatch. For it is my opinion that Mr. Bainton is rapidly approaching his end."

"The carriages are waiting," said Persever. "We go,

Ned," he continued, "to hear the confession of the old woman, Mrs. Sutly. She appointed the hour herself, and named the ones she desired to be present on the occasion."

When the party arrived at Cadaver's house, Ned, escaping a moment from the room where the rest were assembled, traversed the premises with vivid recollections of the fearful night on which he had been so cruelly conveyed thither by Mallex.

"Do you not remember me?" he asked of Mrs. Cadaver, upon meeting with the old woman, in the same room where they had confronted each other, when he was a boy.

"No!" said she.

"You have forgotten the little intruder, then? Don't you recollect how the boy escaped from you and your ferocious dog? How you ran out in the snow, and dropped the key?"

"La, me! Are you that little boy?"

"Yes—or rather, I was——"

"On my knees, I beg your pardon!" said she, kneeling at his feet.

"I forgive you."

"Remember that night! Why I shall never forget it to the last minute of my life! My feet got frost-bit, and I had rhumatiz in my limbs for more nor a year."

"You were sorely punished, then. But what has become of you husband?"

"Jack? They got him at last!"

"Who?"

"The doctors."

"A just retribution! I hope you do not continue the dreadful business?"

"No. But I mought as well do it. I see every night, in my dreams, or when I'm awake, I can't say which, and it amounts to the same thing, whole cords of stark corpses——"

Ned would hear no more. He hastened to the group surrounding the dying woman.

"We are now ready to hear you," said Persever, addressing the wretched invalid, who was propped up in bed.

"Where is he—he—the one I want to see?" she asked, endeavouring to turn her quivering head towards the door.

"Who do you mean?"

"The boy—the boy."

"She means Ned Lorn," said Mrs. Cadaver. "She raved about him all night."

"I am here," said Ned, advancing, and standing at the foot of the bed directly in front of her.

"Yes, you're the one! After your uncle was dead his face seemed young again, and was the pictur of yours. He died——Marcy on me! Oh—oh—oh!"

"Speak!" said Persever.

"I've told you once he was murdered, and that Mallex knew all about it!"

"But you are now going to tell us the particulars," said Persever.

"No I aint—no—no—no!"

"Murdered!" exclaimed Ned, pale and agitated.

"Then why did you request us to come hither to-day?" asked the doctors.

"I wanted to let Ned know that his uncle Bainton had no hand in it, and didn't know anything about it. He's innocent!"

"Thank heaven! Thank heaven!" cried Ned. "He is innocent!"

"Innocent—innocent—innocent!" continued the old wretch. "Yes—yes—yes! But—no—no—don't name heaven! Don't do it, I say. It's too late—it's too late! I'm gone—I'm gone! The devil's got me—he's got me! You can't see him, but I can! He's here! He's grinning! Oh! oh!——"

Nothing more was revealed. The miserable old woman was now a raving maniac, and did not cease her cries until silenced by the hand of death.

Ned hastened away from the appalling scene. Accompanied by Persever he proceeded to the mansion of his uncle. He found him sitting in his great chair, dressed, and awaiting the interview, but with difficulty maintaining his upright position.

"My nephew," said he, in weak and tremulous accents, and extending his hand, which was cordially grasped by our hero, "can you forgive me?"

"Oh, yes! Truly and sincerely, as I hope to be forgiven!"

"Sit close to me. My cough may return, and then I shall not be able to speak. I have done you serious injury—I have possessed your wealth and acquired more, and behold the end! Ill acquired, it bereft me of peace and happiness, and finally planted the fatal disease in my breast which must very soon terminate my mortal career."

"Oh, no! I hope not, my uncle!" said Ned.

"It is past hope—but, thank heaven, not quite past remedy. I have had holy men to see me, and have derived comfort from their promises and the recorded assurances of Him who died for all. Oh, Ned! Avarice is the great monster that roams through the world, destroying its millions. Avoid it. Never seek to possess anything to which you may not be justly entitled! Oh, that my experience could be made a warning to mankind! But Providence has spared me to make restitution—and I am thankful. It affords me the only taste of real pleasure I have enjoyed since I committed the first fatal error. Ere this you have possession of the estates of your father and uncle. Soon, very soon, what is mine shall be added to it!"

Here he was seized with a fit of coughing, but he was too feeble to discharge the accumulated mucus; and flushed and speechless, pointed to the bed, and indicated by signs that he wished them to convey him thither. Persever and Ned hastened to obey. And the doctor, coming in at the same time, shook his head solemnly as he witnessed the ineffectual efforts of the patient to throw off the burden that obstructed the breathing. It was soon over.

* * * * *

A few months after these painful events, Ned and Elgiva were united in holy wedlock in the church at Summerton. The bishop performed the ceremony, attended by all the clergy attached to the prosperous institutions he had founded. The building was filled with admiring spectators. Persever and Susan accompanied Ned to the altar, and Elgiva was followed by a long train of beautiful young ladies, graduates at the Hall.

When the ceremony was over, the congregation remained to witness the baptism of a number of infants. Among

them was one borne in the arms of Mrs. Tim Trudge, a fine male child; and the name bestowed upon it was Persever Ned Lorn Parke. Then Mrs. Timothy Hay presented to the bishop a daughter—which was called Susan Meek Elgiva Bloomville.

* * * * *

The gentlemen appointed to settle the affairs of Mallex—who became a confirmed maniac, ever attended by the patient Tom—declined paying Radley the ten thousand dollars he expected to receive. They could not discover wherein he had earned so large a reward. Only one tenth of that amount was given him. Mallex's promise amounted to nothing, he being *non compos mentis*. But the lawyer had found among the ex-secretary's papers, a document which might, if its contents were made known, compromise some of the party leaders, and even affect the President himself. With this he posted off to Washington, and obtained an appointment worth some two thousand a-year.

Fawner became a principal officer in a large moneyed institution, and gloated over the thousands he had so much desired to possess. He joined the church again; but whether or not he remained a worthy member to the end of his days, which were not many, who shall judge?

Persever of course shared the prosperity of Ned, and won the high distinction in his profession he so truly merited.

Mrs. Lonsdale never married again; and Alice, after so many conquests, did not, at last, possess a single captive.

Susan's life was long and happy.

Upon every anniversary of the death of the poet Elgiva placed a crown of laurels over his head.

THE END

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